

IFAC Membership Category:

Associated Member Organizations (AMOs)

(July 2022)

Motivation

Going back to the founding days, the membership structure of the International Federation of Automatic Control is such that not individuals are members, but “countries”. To quote from the constitution: “For each country, one scientific or professional engineering organization, having a strong interest in automatic control and a sound professional background, or one council formed by two or more such organizations, shall be eligible for membership of IFAC. Such organizations, after admission to IFAC, will be known as National Member Organizations (NMOs) and shall have a responsibility for furthering the aims and objectives of IFAC within their respective countries.” However, since its start IFAC had never more than 50 members, meaning that only control researchers and practitioners in less than 50 countries are represented by IFAC. This is in contrast to “the Vision for IFAC to be the *worldwide* federation for promoting automatic control for the benefit of humankind” “with the primary objective to serve *all those* concerned with the theory and application of automatic control and systems engineering irrespective of, e.g., gender, race, religion, disability, political conviction, or geographic location.” (both quotes from the preamble of IFAC’s constitution).

While some countries have no NMO within IFAC because of their small size or little industrial or research activity in the field of interest to IFAC, other countries are not represented because of financial reasons. Repeated efforts in the past to make IFAC membership affordable to every country did not lead to a successful inclusion of financially weaker countries.

With the introduction of the membership category *Associated Member Organization (AMO)* the International Federation of Automatic Control intends to have a means to include groups of researchers and practitioners *from financially weak countries* in a way that provides dedicated and fitting benefits with little administrative burden both for IFAC and for those groups, with only few formal criteria needed to qualify for the status, and especially free of charge to the AMOs.

This membership category is *not* meant as a means to recruit new NMOs and is *not* meant to raise money for IFAC. On the contrary, IFAC intends to support groups concerned with automatic control in financially weak countries in suitable ways and intends to provide a framework for including and linking them to the federation with this program.

This document describes the rules and procedure as they should be applied. It is the goal to regulate all matters in connection to AMOs as little as possible.

Application to become an AMO

Well defined groups of researchers or practitioners in financially weak countries working in the field of automatic control do apply for becoming an AMO by contacting the IFAC Secretariat in Laxenburg or the Membership Committee. The application can be informal, can be send at any point in time, but needs to give all relevant information, including the following

- A name for the group
- The name and full contact details of a dedicated contact person. Most important is a valid email-address and giving explicitly the name of the country where the AMO is formed.
- A short description of the composition of the group (like “all the control researchers from country xyz”, “members of the control engineering departments at University of zyx and University of yzx”, “members of the national yxz Society that are concerned with automatic control”, or the like. If the prospective AMO is a formal organization information on the organization or a link to its website needs to be provided.
- A list of the individuals forming the AMO, or a description of who those individuals are (like “all the control researchers at University of xyz”).
- A short statement that the person sending the application has the consent of the individuals forming the AMO.
- A short explanation giving the reasons why this prospective AMO is formed (not more than half a page).
- In case there already exists an AMO in that country, reasons can be given why another AMO should be formed (this is not mandatory, but encouraged).
- If available, a reference person active within IFAC can be given who knows about the prospective AMO (this is not mandatory).
- An acknowledgment that all individuals of the prospective AMO will adhere to the IFAC Code of Conduct (<https://www.ifac-control.org/about/ifac-code-of-conduct>).

It is strongly advised that a conversation between the interested groups and a representative of the IFAC Membership Committee will take place *before the actual application*.

Eligibility criteria for becoming an AMO

The following criteria will be checked by IFAC’s Membership Committee when evaluating applications for AMOs and need to be addressed in an informal way in the application:

- No single individual can form an AMO. There needs to be at least a well defined group of people working within IFAC’s area of interest. One dedicated contact person needs to be specified.
- The group of people needs to be from a single country (or in exceptional, well-founded cases a geographical region).

- This country must be a financially weak country (a short justification needs to be given with the application in non-obvious cases). On purpose there is no formal definition of financially weak. Membership Committee will decide in each individual case taking any special circumstances into account.
- Only groups from countries are eligible for which no NMO exists.
- There can be multiple AMOs per country. But this needs justification.
- The prospective AMO needs to be aligned with IFAC's values and needs to explicitly accept IFAC's Code of Conduct.
- If the prospective AMO is a formal organization, at least some overlap with topics of interest of IFAC is required.

Evaluation and decision about AMO applications

Membership Committee will review and assess any AMO application and will make a suggestion to the Executive Officers who will decide (IFAC's policy to always separate review, assessment and decision is shortened here in that review and assessment are combined).

AMO dues

There are none. AMO membership is free of charge.

Benefits for AMOs

The benefits are directed towards support for individual researchers, for the respective country and organization and for support of activities and include the following.

Support for individual researchers from that country:

- Individuals belonging to the AMO can become members of IFAC's Technical Committees. However, they cannot become TC chairs or serve on other Boards and Executive Committees of IFAC – these roles are reserved for people from NMO countries).

Inclusion of the AMO into IFAC matters and the IFAC information flow:

- The AMO can appoint one person, who will have an official guest status at any General Assembly meetings (no voting rights).
- The AMO will receive agendas, minutes, invitations, and the general meeting schedule for Council & Related Meetings.
- Any AMO is given the possibility to suggest agenda items to respective chairs.
- All AMOs will get an experienced IFAC official as mentor, to be appointed by Membership Committee.

Support for activities of/in that country:

- If an AMO is organizing a IFAC co-sponsored conference, they will get a dedicated IPC Advisor (appointed by CB).
AMO cannot organize IFAC main sponsored events. This is only possible for NMOs.
- AMOs are explicitly encouraged to make use of IFAC's Distinguished Lecturer Program, the IFAC Activity Funds Program, etc.

Responsibilities of AMOs

The action of the members of all AMOs has to be in accordance with IFAC's code of conduct. Other than that there is no obligation to participate in any IFAC activity, no obligation for the AMO to organize any internal meetings, etc. The only obligation is to write a short and informal report about 3 months prior to each World Congress indicating that the group is interested in keeping the AMO status (see next Section "Regular reporting").

Regular reporting and evaluation of status

Submission of an informal and short (maximum of half a page) report at the end of every triennium is required to prolong the membership for another triennium. In the report any changes within the AMO since the application or since the last report need to be specified.

Membership Committee will review the report and make a suggestion to the Executive Officers whether membership should be renewed for another triennium, paused or terminated. Executive Officers will formally decide (IFAC's policy to always separate review, assessment and decision is shortened here in that review and assessment are combined).

This regular evaluation not only makes sure that we do not carry over old and outdated AMOs, but also serves as a means to check whether the eligibility has potentially changed.

In case no report is submitted by an AMO, Membership Committee will decide on an individual basis how to proceed.

Membership committee will report on changes in the AMO membership in its yearly report to Council.

Publication of AMO membership

For all AMOs the name, country and the email address of the contact person will be listed on the IFAC website.

Responsibilities of the Membership Committee

IFAC's Membership Committee pledges to actively administer, monitor and develop the AMO membership category. The members of the Membership Committee will actively publicize and promote the possibility to form AMOs.

Evaluation of the Associated Membership Category after a trial period

For the time being, IFAC's constitution is not changed to reflect the, as of now, informal membership category *Associated Member Organization*. After six years this measure to support the automatic control community in financially weak countries and to include them into IFAC's activities will be evaluated by a taskforce consisting of council members (not by Membership Committee). This taskforce will be appointed by council at its 2028 meeting. The actual evaluation should take place the year before the IFAC World Congress 2029, where at the outgoing IFAC Council meeting in 2029 a decision about the continuation, termination, or changes to the program are made. In case of a positive evaluation the inclusion of AMOs into the IFAC constitution should be considered.

Important: It is *not* a goal of the AMO program to recruit new NMOs. It is a means to incorporate researchers in financially weak countries that do not benefit from being an NMO. The program is shaped so that researchers and practitioners in the broad field of automatic control in those countries are linked to IFAC, IFAC activities and the IFAC community and to benefit from IFAC. Whether this goal is reached is the subject of this evaluation.

Frank Allgöwer
on behalf of the Membership Committee
(F. Allgöwer, H. Gao, J. Gomes da Silva Jr., M. Marcos, K. Pettersen)