**PhD Scholarships “Transdisciplinarity for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Caucasus Region”**

Project Context: The project “Transdisciplinarity for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Caucasus Region” (CaucaSusT) is a cooperation of universities in Armenia, Georgia and Austria, funded by the Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education and Research for Development APPEAR. For more details see:

<http://www.appear.at/appear_infos/project_portfolio/academic_partnerships/caucasust_project139/>

In the context of the project two PhD scholarships can be granted to students from Armenia and Georgia to pursue their doctoral studies at University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, Austria.

General conditions:

* Duration: 36 months
* Financed costs
	+ EUR 1,050 per month
	+ Additionally: Travel costs (including field research in the home country) and further grants (e.g. for German courses, participation in conferences)
	+ Exemption from study fees
* Age limit: not older than 35 years (women not older than 40)
* Enrolment at University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU), joint supervision by researchers from BOKU and partner universities in Armenia (Armenian State Pedagogical University) and Georgia (Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University)
* Study courses in Austria, fieldwork in the Caucasus countries

Research Topics:

The descriptions below present a preliminary scope. It will be a task of the selected PhD candidates to further elaborate and develop the topics into a full research proposal together with the CuacaSusT team.

*I. Challenges and options for community-based sustainable tourism in the Caucasus region*

Sustainable tourism is defined by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as *"Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.”*

Community participation in tourism development is an essential way towards implementation of sustainable tourism principles. The aim of community-based tourism is to ensure that members of local communities have a high degree of control over activities taking place in their localities and a significant proportion of the economic benefits.

The Caucasus Region, shared by six countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Russia and Turkey), with its high diversity of natural and cultural assets offers a great, yet underutilized potential for establishing tourism projects on community level.

The purpose of the PhD thesis is to

* Explore existing sustainable community-based tourism activities in the Caucasus countries
* Identify relevant actors and target groups
* Conduct analysis of framework conditions for the development of community-based tourism
* Identify challenges for community-based tourism development and propose solutions on different levels (Policy, Practice, Research, Regional, National and Local levels)
* Identify necessary qualifications training needs for the local actors
* Suggest suitable offers
* Propose scenarios for benefit and burden sharing within communities
* Propose solutions for Marketing, Networks, cooperation on national and international levels

The study cases shall be taken from at least two countries in the Caucasus region, one of them must be Armenia or Georgia.

*II. Transdisciplinary cooperation between universities and local communities for the development of community-based sustainable tourism*

The field of environmental protection and sustainable development is complex and interconnected with a number of other sectors including economy and socio-cultural life, and tourism development is one example of a complex interrelation in this regard. The role of science and research in addressing challenges in this field, both on the practice level and on the policy level, from local to national scales, needs to be strengthened in Armenia and Georgia. Progress in this respect highly depends on innovating university practices, including by introducing transdisciplinary approaches to teaching and research practices.

Transdisciplinary research implies transcending and integrating disciplinary paradigms and methodologies in order to address socially relevant issues, as well as involving practitioners and relevant non-scientific actors through various stages of the research process problem definition and framing, integration of knowledge, and elaboration of results. Identification and integration of stakeholders is a critical part of transdisciplinary research, and involves a number of challenges.

Universities in Armenia and Georgia are aware of transdisciplinary approaches and are in the phase of developing structures and curriculum in this respect. The purpose of the PhD thesis is to

* Explore challenges and options for establishing transdisciplinary teaching and research in the university system of Armenia and/or Georgia
* Explore typologies of stakeholders
* Develop an analysis framework for the evaluation of case studies
* Implement the framework for study cases in Armenia and/or Georgia
* Provide recommendations on different levels for the implementation of transdisciplinary approaches in academia
* Provide recommendations for stakeholder integration into research projects in Armenia and/or Georgia

The PhD candidate will cooperate with the Appear CaucaSusT project partners and assist in developing and implementing the project activities. Study cases will be based on the sites selected for the CaucaSusT project.

Qualifications:

* Master degree in relevant discipline (geography, tourism, economics, environmental sciences, social sciences….), equivalent to 300 ECTS
* Solid knowledge of English as well as Armenian and/or Georgian
* Eligibility to travel
* Creativity, interpersonal skills
* Keen interest in the proposed PhD topic

Requirements

* Motivation Letter
* Curriculum vitae
* Ideas for a PhD proposal – short description, contents, objectives, methodology, time schedule (stating the tentative time for field studies in the home country), and the relation to the thematic focus of APPEAR.
* Confirmation of the applicant - The applicant confirms his / her intention to return to the home country after the completion of the studies and to pursue an appropriate, development-related assignment.
* Evidence of previous studies, Bachelor and master degree plus listing of subjects and grades (copies)
* Abstract of the Master’s thesis
* The documents can be submitted in German or English.
* Proof of language skills (English and / or German)
* Photocopy of the passport / ID

BOKU PhD application requirements:

Only after a scholarship is awarded by the APPEAR program legalised documents have to be submitted for the admission at BOKU University. For more information see:

<https://www.boku.ac.at/en/studienservices/themen/zulassung/internationale-vorbildung/doktorats-phd-studien/zulassung-zum-doktorat-fuer-nicht-eu-und-ewr-buergerinnen/>