

# PROJECT REPORT

## PROJECT 73P11: INTER-UNIVERSITY TRAINING PROGRAMME “SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS AND AQUATIC RESOURCES”

### 1. BACKGROUND

Institutions of Higher Education & Research and its graduates are considered as key-agents for developing and implementing innovative and sustainable freshwater ecosystem management concepts/policies/practises. The project enabled students to collaborate with state-of-the-art experts in the following key-areas: (1) Development and implementation of sustainable freshwater ecosystem management strategies; (2) development, implementation and monitoring the effect of evidence-based policies; and (3) mobilising financial resources and society to improve the management of environmental assets.

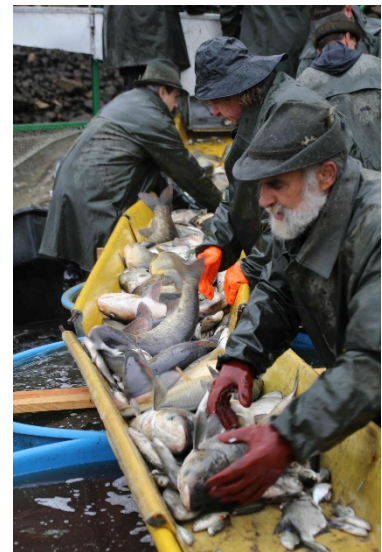
### 2. PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Appreciating the European integration process in higher education and research, BOKU-IHG and USB-FFPW have implemented a collaborative educational programme which is cost-effective and providing mutual benefits to both institutions and its students. The inter-university exchange programme combined the complementing expertise of the partner institutions. BOKU-IHG was providing expertise on assessment & monitoring of the ecological integrity of freshwater ecosystems, conservation of freshwater biota & habitats, restoration of riverine landscapes, environmental planning & modelling, environmental impact assessment, limnology, taxonomy and ecology of freshwater organisms. USB-FFPW was providing expertise on aquaculture, fisheries, environmental chemistry and biochemistry. The project provided research & management expertise to students and staff members which is not available at their home universities. Unique research infrastructure of BOKU-IHG and USB-FFPW was presented to promote future joint research activities of students and research staff of both institutions. BOKU-IHG students attended the workshop „Ponds of South Bohemia and Waldviertel – production constituent and important component of the life in both regions” of the EU-funded project “Trafoon (EU-FP7, No. 613912)”.

#### 2.a. Implementation of tailor-made training course in Czech Republic

14 BOKU students attended a tailor-made training course in Czech Republic on aquaculture, fisheries and environmental chemistry. 10 students were sponsored via the AKTION project – however, BOKU-

IHG provided financial assistance to 4 additional students to attend the training course, due to the large number of BOKU-student applications. The training course was organised by USB-FFPW from 11<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> of October 2015, held at Vodňany and field-work and excursions to Třeboň (Protected Landscape Area and Ramsar site Třeboňsko, guided by ENKI Třeboň), fish hatcheries and to fish ponds nearby Vodňany. An official university course certificate with 3 ECTS was issued from USB-FFPW to the BOKU students. The detailed course programme and list of participants is depicted in Annex I and Annex II of this report.



## 2b. Implementation of tailor-made training course in Austria

9 USB-FFPW students attended a tailor-made training course on the assessment & monitoring of the ecological integrity of freshwater ecosystems, conservation of freshwater biota & habitats, restoration of riverine landscapes, environmental impact assessment and taxonomy & ecology of freshwater organisms. The training course was organised by BOKU-IHG on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2016 and from 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2016. USB-FFPW provided financial support to making use of institute vehicles to facilitate the travel of students and lecturers. Lectures were held at BOKU in Vienna, at the WasserCluster Lunz and in Carinthia during the 3-days excursion to the River Möll and River Drau. Field-work was carried-out in Vienna (fish pass system of the hydropower plant Freudenu), at the Schwechat River, in Lunz (HyTEC, Lunzer Seebach) and in Carinthia (River Möll, River Drau). An official university course certificate with 3 ECTS was issued from BOKU to the USB-FFPW students. The detailed course programme and list of participants is depicted in Annex III and Annex IV of this report.



## 3. Feasibility study and road map towards the development of joint courses/modules/programmes between BOKU-IHG and USB-FFPW

The training courses organised by BOKU-IHG and USB-FFPW were evaluated within feed-back sessions with the course participants at the end of each training course. Overall, the course participants

evaluated the course programme as “very suitable to complement their expertise”, “good balance of theoretical and practical components”, “very good expertise of lecturers” and “well organised”.

BOKU-IHG and USB-FFPW staff held workshop sessions on the assessment of training courses held in the Czech Republic and Austria and on the development of joint course/modules/programmes during the training courses held in Vodňany, Třeboň, Vienna and Carinthia, with the following conclusions drawn:

- The AKTION project has enabled BOKU-IHG and USB-FFPW to get a detailed insights on the research expertise, research infrastructure, academic teaching programmes and universities regulations of each other.
- BOKU-IHG and USB-FFPW appreciated the training courses given by the respective partner highly and considered them as excellent additions to the courses given at each home university.
- BOKU-IHG and USB-FFPW agreed to intensify the inter-university collaboration at the Master’s and PhD level via:
  - Hosting students of each other for carrying-out MSc & PhD research activities and eventual joint supervision of MSc & PhD research projects;
  - Seeking for funds for MSc & PhD student exchange programmes.
- BOKU-IHG and USB-FFPW agreed to intensify the inter-university collaboration via initiating joint research activities (e.g. sturgeon research, taxonomy of fish & benthic invertebrates, river and riverine landscape restoration) and future joint projects.
- BOKU-IHG and USB-FFPW agreed that the establishment of joint course modules and/or establishing a joint Master’s/PhD programme is not easily feasible currently (availability of funds, diversity of university regulations) – however, both BOKU-IHG and USB-FFPW will continue to seek for feasible possibilities to establish joint course modules and/or joint Master’s/PhD programme in future.

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