

**MOTIVATION AND EXPECTATION : *What are your motives for applying to this scholarship? What do you hope to achieve from the study visit?***

Motivation for choosing this topic: The new EU Biodiversity Strategy headline target to halt the biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystem services by 2020 is a sizeable proposal. The integration of the Natura 2000 framework within the management of IUCN categories of protected areas and implementation of the EU's nature conservation policy is still a challenge for authorities in post-communist countries.

Based on similar history of political systems, changes in property rights and land use after the communism and the similar amount of time within the EU, the targeted countries face similar problems in the implementation of conservation policy at national level. In the case of grassland habitats, there is a gap between the scientific knowledge and public administration. The lack of or weaknesses in collaboration between the responsible authorities for agriculture and nature conservation are creating a series of difficulties in the implementation process at different levels of the public administration.

Linking my experience in public administration with scientific experience, I have become interested in how this gap could be bridged in the case of grassland habitats. During my DBU scholarship I have gained a theoretical knowledge of these aspects and focused mainly on the case of Baden-Württemberg. Comparing the situation of this federal state with Romania (based on experts' interviews), I observed that the backgrounds of the problems are very complex and mainly have to do with the strength of the public administration and economic issues. For this reason I have directed my attention to post-communist countries, which are facing much more similar difficulties in the implementation of EU Biodiversity Strategy in protected areas.

Motivation for applying:

- to gain more international experience as a young scientist and an entry-level experienced person in the field of nature conservation, protected areas' management and nature conservation policy's implementation in post-communist countries;
- to get to know different cases and make observations by visiting different protected areas in order to compare the findings with the Romanian situation;

Expectations from the study visits:

- to have a better understanding and comparison of the everyday situation and particular experiences of the experts from different countries on the implementation of EU Biodiversity Strategy in protected areas;
- to improve my academic and professional career by getting in contact with experts from post-communist countries;
- to establish a network for internationally and interdisciplinary collaboration in order to improve the links among the academic and administrative knowledge domains and to contribute to the problem-oriented knowledge in the case of grassland habitats;
- to contribute to the improvement of implementation of EU Biodiversity Strategy in protected areas in Romania in the future.

By the Alfred Toepfer scholarship, I could deepen my practical experience by visiting protected areas in different countries and discussing the problems with key persons who are involved actively in the field of nature conservation.

## PROJECT PROPOSAL – STUDY VISIT :

**The aim of the study** is to visit different protected areas within some of the post-communist countries of Europe in order to improve my experience in the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy in different countries.

**The objective** of the study is:

- Comparison on the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy with emphasis on grassland habitats in different protected areas in Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic.

**Activities** during scholarship within each of the proposed protected areas are:

- visit of the area headquarters and field trips on grassland areas;
- presentation about the implementation of EU Biodiversity Strategy in Romania on grassland habitats;
- interviews with experts on five core aspects: public administration, effective management of protected area, monitoring of grassland habitats/species, rewarding systems and collaboration with stakeholders.

In order to verify the feasibility of this scholarship in case of successful application I have contacted persons from the proposed protected areas (see table 1).

**Table 1:** Protected areas, list of contacted persons and status of agreement to the proposal

Nr	Protected area proposed to be visited	Country	Contacted persons	Agreement
1	Hortobágy National Park web: <a href="http://www.hnp.hu">http://www.hnp.hu</a>	Hungary	<b>Dávid Bogyó</b> , PhD, biologist/project co-ordinator Hortobagy National Park Directorate e-mail: <a href="mailto:bogyodavid@hnp.hu">bogyodavid@hnp.hu</a>	achieved*
2	Bükk National Park web: <a href="http://www.bnpi.hu">www.bnpi.hu</a>	Hungary	<b>Schmotzer András</b> research adviser Bükk National Park Directorate e-mail: <a href="mailto:schmotzera@bnpi.hu">schmotzera@bnpi.hu</a>	achieved
3	National Park Nízke Tatry (Low Tatras) web: <a href="http://www.napant.sk">http://www.napant.sk</a>	Slovakia	<b>RNDr. Peter Turis</b> , botanist National Park Nízke Tatry e-mail: <a href="mailto:peter.turis@soprs.sk">peter.turis@soprs.sk</a> web: <a href="http://www.soprs.sk">www.soprs.sk</a>	achieved
4	National Park Velka Fatra web: <a href="http://www.soprs.sk/velkafatraweb/en">http://www.soprs.sk/velkafatraweb/en</a>	Slovakia	<b>Ing. Viktoria Chilova</b> , botanist National Park Veľká Fatra e-mail: <a href="mailto:viktoria.chilova@soprs.sk">viktoria.chilova@soprs.sk</a> web: <a href="http://www.soprs.sk">www.soprs.sk</a>	achieved
5	National Park Krkonoše web: <a href="http://www.krnap.cz">http://www.krnap.cz</a>	Czech Republic	<b>Jana Urbancíková</b> Coordinator in the Bile Karpaty Education Centre e-mail: <a href="mailto:urbancikova@bilekarpaty.cz">urbancikova@bilekarpaty.cz</a> Bartolomějské náměstí 47, 698 01 Veselí nad Moravou	Waiting for answer
6	White Carpathians Protected Landscape Area web: <a href="http://vis.bilekarpaty.cz">http://vis.bilekarpaty.cz</a>	Czech Republic		

\*confirmed by e-mail

**Methodology:** to realize the aim and the objective in a proper mode I would apply the case study design and methods by Yin, 2014 using participant observation, expert interviews and document analysis, as developed and used during the DBU scholarship.

**Expected results:** professional experience and a report on the comparison of the visited areas on the five aspects (public administration, effective management of protected area, monitoring of grassland habitats/species, rewarding systems and collaboration with stakeholders.).

**Dissemination of results** will take place on both scientific level and public level.

**References:** Yin R.K. (2014) *Case Study Research. Design and Methods (Applied Social Research Methods Series). 5th Edition. Sage Publications. Inc.*