



ATS Scholarship 2016



APPLICATION FORM - 2016 Scholarship

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Last name/ Surname : First name :

MOTIVATION AND EXPECTATION :

What are your motives for applying to this scholarship? What do you hope to achieve from the study visit?

(max. 2500 characters with spaces)

Floodplain grasslands play an important role in the context of climate change mitigation and adaption and they serve different ecosystem services such as flood protection, water purification, nutrient and water retention and, of course, food production. However these habitats are strongly threatened by human activities. This is very important for Eastern and Central Europe where many examples from the last decennium have shown a shift in flooding periods from winter to summer which generates more severe consequences. Therefore, nature-based approaches need to be taken into account where restoration of floodplain functions, safety and habitat creation are combined together.

The above mentioned issue – a shift in flooding periods from winter to summer floods due to climate change – seems to appear more frequent among the Latvia's rivers and therefore there is an urgent need for projects with nature-based approaches for climate change mitigation and adaption, and projects with sustainable long-term effect on nature conservation. So far, in Latvia we have had small-scale projects and usually those projects goals are reached within the project lifespan but not afterwards and also have not used this nature-based approaches. This is the main reason why I would like to apply for this scholarship, with the Alfred Toepfer Stiftung support I will be able to visit protected areas where a large-scale floodplain restoration projects have happened and it will be a great opportunity to learn the best experiences.

The idea what I want to see and take home is not so much about the floodplain meadow restoration projects as itself but more how these project sites have been managed afterwards by the protected area administration with and without the local involvement.

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Also how the finances for site management are generated (e.g. Agri-Environmental schemes, subsidies), how the monitoring is done by the administration and how this data is used for nature conservation, including informing the public. Moreover, it is an opportunity to see in practice how nature-based approaches in climate change mitigation and adaptation look like because it is a new path in Latvia's nature conservation and management. Of course, it will be interesting to see the project goals and activities, how these activities have been planned and realized, especially the ones that can be applied in Latvia but it is not the main interest.

PROJECT PROPOSAL – STUDY VISIT :

What are the different steps of your study visit? Why did you choose these specific protected areas?

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First of all, I would like to visit the protected areas administration offices, to meet staff and get familiar with their work and aims. I also would like to tell them about the nature conservation and management practice in Latvia and about the region where I work, including the recent projects and its outcome etc.

Secondly, I would like to visit the areas where floodplain habitat restoration works took place and see how these areas look now. It will be interesting to see if the goals of the project have been reached and still is ongoing. It is rather common that usually the goal is reached only within the project framework but afterwards it stops due to financial problems, lack of technique and no cooperation with locals. In many cases the projects are not sustainable in a long term. I have agreed with the administration staff that they will tell and show me how these grasslands are managed, will tell about the cooperation with nature conservation NGOs, local authorities and farmers.

Thirdly, I will be told about the technical details of grassland and hydrological regime restoration, e.g., monitoring, measures, techniques applied etc. I am also interested how the administration does monitoring (which methods, data) and how they use this information in nature protection.

And finally, I would like to become familiar with their experience how to reach practitioners and the public. In nature conservation the comprehensive information and publicity work is a key part but it is not an easy task to do. I am interested which methods or tools they have used to get locals motivated and involved in the participation in relation to site management. This is very important in relation with flooding because most of the people see floods as the main threat and they can not understand the benefits which natural river floodplains can give.



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Moreover, I am also keen to hear about the financial aspect in relation to the management of grassland habitats (e.g. protected areas annual budget that is devoted to grassland management, Agri-Environmental schemes etc.).

I have chosen these countries (Poland, Hungary, Estonia) as their natural and socio-economic conditions are similar to Latvia's, and also because the nature protection system is very alike. I had a specific criteria for the selection of protected areas – a project based floodplain meadow restoration works – which have happened already in the last five years (not those projects that have just finished). In all selected protected areas (Biebrza National Park in Poland, Orseg National Park in Hungary, Alam-Pedja Nature Reserve in Estonia) large-scale conservation projects were carried out and still many aspects such as closeness of approximation to natural conditions, significant national relevance, compensatory payments for conservation related site management and development work are still alive after the end of project. These were the main reasons for the selection. In this study visit I wanted to include also Lithuania as they have had large-scale floodplain restoration works but so far I have not heard anything from them. If my application will be successful then maybe it will be possible to include also Lithuania as they are very close to Latvia and their experience would be very practical and suitable.