



**REGIONAL POST-GRADUATE SCHOOL OF INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF TROPICAL FORESTS AND TERRITORIES**

**- ERAIFT -**

**Category 2 center under the auspices of UNESCO**

**International call for applications for doctoral research scholarship under the EU-funded consortium "ERAIFT – AGRINATURA"**

## **1. Background and rationale**

This call for applications is part of the program called: "Knowledge-based sustainable management of tropical ecosystems", under the funding of the EU-Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) No. 41928. The program has several components, including "Capacity-building of biodiversity practitioners, scientists and policymakers for the sustainable management of protected areas and forest ecosystems in Africa". The project's overall objective is to "Support environmental policies and investments for the sustainable, participatory and equitable management of protected areas and forest ecosystems in Africa". The specific objective is "To contribute to the capacity-building of biodiversity practitioners, scientists and policymakers in the production and use of information for the sustainable management of protected areas and forest ecosystems in Africa. "The project's target group is "biodiversity practitioners, scientists, CSOs and the private sector, as well as policymakers. "The project area covers the Congo Basin and West Africa and is implemented by AGRINATURA-EEIG (European Alliance on Agricultural Knowledge for Development) and the Ecole Régionale Postuniversitaire d'Aménagement et de Gestion Intégrés des Forêts et Territoires Tropicaux (ERAIFT). AGRINATURA-EEIG has also delegated the management of the project activities – dedicated to it – to the University of Liège (Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech).

## **2. Key project stakeholders**

### **2.1 AGRINATURA**

AGRINATURA is a consortium of 35 European universities and research institutions with a shared interest in supporting sustainable agricultural development to improve people's living conditions, according to the Sustainable Development Goals. AGRINATURA pools its resources to work in partnership with international collaborators, particularly in developing countries. Through joint research, education and training projects, and development, AGRINATURA promotes scientific excellence by providing scientific expertise to implement field projects and build stakeholders' capacity. The European Economic Interest Grouping AGRINATURA has been specially created to implement and manage projects that call on the expertise of several of its members. The group represents more than 10,000 researchers, teacher-researchers, and engineers in agricultural research for development, in permanent positions. The member institutions of AGRINATURA are:



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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Agricultural University of Tirana, Albania</li> <li>2. University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU), Austria</li> <li>3. Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Belgium</li> <li>4. Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium</li> <li>5. Ghent University, Belgium</li> <li>6. Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech, University of Liège, Belgium</li> <li>7. Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Czech Republic</li> <li>8. Aarhus University, Denmark</li> <li>9. University of Copenhagen, Denmark</li> <li>10. Helsinki University, Finland</li> <li>11. Agropolis International, France</li> <li>12. Montpellier SupAgro, France</li> <li>13. Institute of research for development, France</li> <li>14. Center for international cooperation research and development in agriculture, CIRAD, France</li> <li>15. Agreenium, France</li> <li>16. Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech- University of Liège, Belgium</li> <li>17. College of International Agro-Development (ISTOM), France</li> <li>18. Consiglio per la ricerca in agricoltura e l'analisi dell'economia agraria (CREA), Italy</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>19. Georg-August University Göttingen, Centre of Biodiversity and Sustainable Land Use, Germany</li> <li>20. Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn, Germany</li> <li>21. University of Hohenheim, Germany</li> <li>22. Szent Istvan University, Hungary</li> <li>23. National University of Ireland Galway, Ireland</li> <li>24. University College Cork, Ireland</li> <li>25. The University of Catania, Italy</li> <li>26. Wageningen University and Research, the Netherlands</li> <li>27. International Centre for development-oriented Research in Agriculture (ICRA), the Netherlands</li> <li>28. Instituto Superior de Agronomia, Portugal</li> <li>29. Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Sweden</li> <li>30. Bern University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland</li> <li>31. Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, UK</li> <li>32. Polytechnic University of Madrid, Spain</li> <li>33. University of Reading, UK</li> <li>34. Natural Resources Institute Finland (LUKE), Finland</li> <li>35. Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), Netherlands</li> </ol> |
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**2.2 ERAIFT**

Created on April 10, 1999, the School is based on the UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere project (MAB program), which aims at sustainable human development in harmony with the environment. Since 2016, ERAIFT enjoys the status of a UNESCO Category-II Center<sup>1</sup> and contributes since its creation to the capacity-building of executives and decision-makers from 23 French and Portuguese speaking countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian Ocean region in the management of protected areas, as well as in the sustainable development of tropical forests and lands (about 300 Masters, 28 PhDs and more than a thousand executives from the public and private sectors trained in the field of "forest-environment"). In addition, its management bodies (Board of Directors, Academic and Research Council - CAR, Executive

<sup>1</sup> Category-2 centers and institutes contribute to the execution of UNESCO's programme through capacity-building, exchange of information in a particular discipline, theoretical and experimental research, and advanced training in specific fields of competence. They are under the auspices of UNESCO, but are not legally part of the Organization; they are governed by their own rules formally approved by the General Conference. These centers and institutes form a vast network of associated centers in the fields of water, renewable energy, science policy, biotechnology, geosciences, basic sciences and remote sensing.



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board) give the School an international governance ensuring institutional sustainability and viability. Moreover, to ensure its smooth functioning, several collaboration agreements have been concluded at the national, regional, and international levels with various technical and financial partners.

At the national level, ERAIFT is located on the University of Kinshasa (UNIKIN) campus and maintains a fruitful scientific and academic collaboration with this academic institution. In addition, ERAIFT has concluded a partnership for the execution of its three regional Masters with the University of Kisangani (UNIKIS) located in the eastern part of the DRC, in the region of lowland tropical rainforests. This university-teaching institution is located in the forest zone and surrounded by several protected areas, including the Maiko National Park, the Okapi Wildlife Reserve (OWR), and the Yangambi Biosphere Reserve (YBR). This geographic location provides UNIKIS with good conditions for field learning in forestry and environmental sciences. ERAIFT has also signed a collaboration agreement with the University of Lubumbashi (UNILU) located in the southern part of the DRC, in the mining region of Katanga, in the middle of a "miombo" clear forest. This environment is particularly favorable to study this type of forest and the numerous surrounding savannahs and to understand the problems of mining on the environment and humans. At the sub-regional level, a collaboration agreement has been signed for the collaborative implementation of the regional training organized by ERAIFT with: 1) the Universities of Dschang and Yaoundé 1 as well as the Garoua's Wildlife School in Cameroon; 2) the University of Sciences and Technology of Masuku and the *Ecole Nationale des Eaux et Forêts* (National School of Water and Forests) in Gabon. These various agreements with national and regional institutions provide for the regional mobility of students and trainers in order to foster an exchange of experiences and expertise in the implementation of joint projects, research projects, under joint supervision, and the sharing of experiences and lessons learned for capitalization at the regional level.

The present project will thus allow to further consolidate regional partnership in Central Africa, but also to build other partnerships, currently underway at the level of Eastern and Southern Africa (with, for example, The African Leadership University (School of Wildlife Conservation, based in Rwanda<sup>2</sup>), The South African Wildlife College, The Kitabi College of Conservation and Environmental Management) to collegially implement the Master's courses, and to ensure the regional mobility of the students and trainers as recommended by the "LMD system"<sup>3</sup>. The objective is to network ERAIFT, the Garoua Wildlife School (Cameroon), the ALU School of Wildlife Conservation (Rwanda), the Kitabi College (Rwanda), and the Wildlife College (South Africa) and other French and English speaking partners to be identified.

Moreover, in the framework of South-South cooperation, in 2008, the Executive Board of UNESCO decided to transfer the experience of ERAIFT to other sub-regions of Africa, particularly in West Africa (a project for the creation of an IRAIFT - Regional Post-Graduate Institute for Integrated Management of Tropical Forests and Lands - is underway, possibly in Côte d'Ivoire).

At the international level, the consolidation of this network of French and English-speaking African institutions will also increase their capacity to integrate into the "Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Program - EMJM", as is already the case for the University of Dschang in Cameroon. Indeed, this high-level integrated international educational program is delivered by an international consortium of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) from different countries and, where appropriate, other teaching or non-teaching partners with specific expertise and interest in the fields of study/professional areas covered by the joint educational program. EMJM aim to 1) foster quality enhancement, innovation, excellence, and internationalization at the level of higher education institutions (HEIs); 2) enhance the quality and

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<sup>2</sup> ALU also cooperates with Kitabi College in Rwanda and Wildlife College in South Africa.

<sup>3</sup> Within the framework of the European Higher Education Area, the "LMD" system (L for License/Bachelor, M for Master and D for Doctorate) aims to harmonize higher education curricula in Europe and to promote student mobility at regional, national and European levels.



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attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and support the Union's external action in the field of higher education by awarding scholarships to the best Master's students in the world to prepare for a full Master's degree; and 3) to improve the level of competences and skills of Master's graduates and, in particular, the relevance of Joint Masters for the labor market, by involving employers more in the world of education. In addition, ERAIFT has negotiated and concluded several partnership agreements with institutions allowing for international scientific supervision of researchers and doctoral students, such as the University of Liège with its "Central Africa" Platform located within the ERAIFT facilities, the University of Gent, the University of Laval the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, the Botanical Garden of Meise, the Satellite Observatory of Central African Forests (OSFAC), OFAC, HIST (China), the Federal University of Para, the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, CIRAD, and the Centre for International Forestry Research-CIFOR.

In addition, ERAIFT, ENEF, and another partner have created the Central African Network of Forestry and Environmental Training Institutions (RIFFEAC). This technical platform currently includes 23 training institutions in the Central African sub-region and aims to develop the capacities and structures necessary for joint and sustainable environmental and forestry resources management. Created in Libreville, Gabon, in 2001, RIFFEAC became in 2006 the partner of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) for the implementation of the strategic axis of its Convergence Plan related to "Capacity building, stakeholder participation, information, and training". Finally, a key element of ERAIFT's role at the international level was formalized by the signing of an MoU creating the "South-South Cooperation network for sustainable development in the three great tropical forest basins of the world" between the UNESCO-Chair in Sustainable Development of the Federal University of Para, Belém, Brazil (Amazon Basin), ERAIFT, University of Kinshasa, DRC (Congo Basin) and the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (Southeast Asia) in the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the International Coordinating Council of the MAB Programme held in Jeju (Republic of Korea, May 28, 2009).

Thanks to UNESCO, a structural cooperation with the UNESCO HIST Category 2 Centre in China (Beijing), which specialized in remote sensing, has also been established. Furthermore, joint visits to Biosphere Reserves with Brazilian (Yangambi Reserve, DRC) and Indonesian (Wundanlachi Reserve in China, Pekamaru, Indonesia) partners and data sharing between these institutions have also been carried out.

### 3. Key components of the present AGRINATURA/EU EU-funded program

The main expected results of this program can be summarized in the following five outputs:

- Output 1:** Future agents for the sustainable management of protected areas and forest ecosystems in Africa are trained (masters, doctorates) within specialized regional schools (ERAIFT and its partner institutions).
- Output 2:** Ongoing training organized for the different categories of actors involved in the sustainable management of protected areas and forest ecosystems in Africa.
- Output 3:** Training and research tools and materials on biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of protected areas and forest ecosystems in Africa are designed, made accessible, and disseminated.
- Output 4:** ERAIFT and its national and regional partner institutions are strengthened in terms of hosting capacity, computerized management, and field equipment/materials.
- Output 5:** The results of scientific research carried out within AGRINATURA and/or ERAIFT institutions, in collaboration with their regional partners, on biodiversity conservation and



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sustainable management of protected areas and forest ecosystems in Africa, are capitalized and made available to decision-makers as decision support tools.

As it can be noticed, the project plans five different products, which mainly focus on continuous and diploma training, logistic support to the concerned institutions, and scientific research, in order to generate new capitalizable knowledge in sustainable forest management. This call for applications is part of the support to scientific research at the doctoral level. It aims to "select the beneficiaries of doctoral scholarships" whose results will contribute to achieving the project objectives. These research works will contribute to the objectives of component 3 of the program – "Knowledge-based sustainable management of tropical ecosystems".

**4. Profile of the beneficiary and elements of the application for candidates eligible for the doctoral scholarship**

The present application is addressed to candidates with the following profile:

- Hold a Master-2 degree or a *Diplôme d'Études Approfondies* - Master of Advanced Studies (DEA) or an equivalent degree, obtained with at least 70% of the marks in the last year of training (cf. transcripts and a copy of the Master-2 diploma or equivalent); or to hold a Master-1 degree from ERAIFT with at least distinction, and later to justify a Master-2 diploma with at least distinction (at least 70% of the marks); application of the systems approach will allow for holders of Master degrees from all disciplines relevant to protected area development and management (not only directly related to environmental sciences such as agronomy, forestry or geography but also human sciences such as sociology or law) to apply;
- Present both in English and French its research protocol following the systems approach, and which includes a logical framework, coherent planning of activities over four (4) years as well as budgetary estimates to carry out this work, and to have a supervisor and/or co-supervisor from member institutions of AGRINATURA (North) and ERAIFT (South); even if the candidate does not have a supervisor from the North, he/she will still be able to apply; in this case, if selected, a supervisor from the North will be assigned to him/her;
- Fill out an identification form for doctoral registration according to the ERAIFT guidelines on its website [www.eraift-rdc.org](http://www.eraift-rdc.org);
- Be under 40 years of age at the time of application;
- Present certificates of birth, physical fitness, nationality and good conduct or equivalent;
- Provide a handwritten cover letter, in French and English (one page each);
- Submit a letter of acceptance of supervision and application support from a Northern supervisor, member of the academic staff of an AGRINATURA member institution and eligible as a supervisor (advisor) of a doctoral thesis according to the regulations of his institution; the command of the French language by the Northern supervisor is considered an asset; when the candidate does not yet have a Northern supervisor, he/she can still submit his/her application; in this case, if selected, a supervisor from the North will be assigned to him/her;
- Submit a letter of acceptance of support for the application from a Southern supervisor – teaching at ERAIFT ;
- Demonstrate sufficient bilingualism (ability to work and publish in both French and English);
- Female candidates are strongly encouraged to apply.

It is worth noting that research with another source of funding (e.g., a doctoral fellowship) is not eligible for this scholarship. The organization of the doctoral training will be done in tandem between ERAIFT and



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the various AGRINATURA partner institutions. Once enrolled in the Ph.D. program, the following conditions must be observed:

- Take a double registration, at ERAIFT and another partner institution member of AGRINATURA (the North supervisor academic institution); each academic year one should renew its registration in the two institutions (thesis of co-tutorship leading to two degrees from both relevant institutions) ;
- Regularly attend doctoral seminars at the institutions involved in the Ph.D., and validate the credits provided;
- Regularly submit partial reports of the evaluation of its doctoral research to the member institutions that supervise the thesis;
- Valorize research data by publishing at least two scientific articles in credible international peer-reviewed journals, preferably with an impact factor.

**5. Examples of eligible areas for doctoral research**

Priority research topics must be in line with the overall objective of the program (see above). For example, applicants will find below some examples of eligible themes (non-exhaustive list):

- Assessment of climate change impact and implementation of REDD+ mechanisms in the context of timber logging;
- Analysis of disrupted ecosystem restoration;
- Valuation of local/indigenous knowledge in the study of protected areas and their management;
- Replenishment of commercial species in forest concessions;
- Inclusion of tropical commercial species in the periphery of protected areas;
- Implementation of programs for timber species improvement;
- Spatial analysis of land use dynamics of conservation areas and corresponding landscapes;
- Rational and sustainable management of large and medium-sized wildlife ;
- Harmonization of forestry policies in the Congo Basin and West Africa ;
- Governance of protected areas and biosphere reserves ;
- Development and sustainable management of wetlands;
- Forest genetics and timber stand improvement;
- Sustainable agricultural development towards the improvement of the livelihoods in the protected areas;
- Impacts on environmental policies and investments for sustainable, participatory and equitable management of protected areas and forest ecosystems in Africa;
- Economic and social value of protected areas ;
- Land conflicts – in a broad sense – between urbanization, agricultural development and nature conservation;
- Local communities' perceptions of protected areas and biodiversity conservation;
- Value chain analysis of agricultural and forestry products ;
- Analysis of the ecological functioning of natural, semi-natural and anthropogenic systems.
- Other topics related to the operation, analysis and management of protected areas and natural resources.

Applicants can always contact the ERAIFT authorities for more details as for eligibility of their research area.

**6. Provisions covered by the scholarship**

Heading	Reference amount
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Monthly allowance for stays in Europe	1500 EUR/month (max. 4500 EUR/year)
Housing Subsidies in Europe	250 EUR/month (max. 750 EUR/year)
Return airfare N/S	1 ticket; max. 1000 EUR/year
Administrative/academic fees (registration, visa, insurance, etc.)	Max. 2000 EUR/year
Research costs (field, conferences, publications, etc.)	Max. 6000 EUR/year
Supervisory costs (for northern host labs)	500 EUR/month (max. 1500 EUR/year)
Advisor/Supervisor mission (N/S or S/N)	Max. 3000 EUR/year

As an international mobility scholarship, the Ph.D. researcher will stay in the Northern supervisor's institute for three months every year. The duration of the scholarship is limited to 4 years.

Potential applicants can always contact the ERAIFT Director for further details.

**7. Eligible priority expenses for doctoral research**

The awarded scholarship will primarily cover the following expenses:

- Thesis registration in the institutions involved, and regular renewal of the re-registration (every following year),
- Candidate travel from his/her home country to his/her place of training, during doctoral seminars and other activities related to his/her doctorate,
- Health insurance during his doctoral studies,
- Miscellaneous printing, major research equipment, housing and food, internet and digital library access,
- Field research, stay/internship in the institution of his/her supervisor and co-supervisor,
- Publication costs of scientific articles in international journals ;
- Participation in international scientific congresses where they are selected to give presentations;
- Assessment of the thesis by external examiners appointed by the institutions organizing the doctorate,
- Organization of the private and public defense of their thesis and diploma fees.

Each expense, within the framework of doctoral research, must be validated by the supervisors.

**8. Application submission**

The compressed file will be sent by email only to the following addresses

- Addressee: Baudouin Michel, Director of ERAIFT and President of the Academic and Research Council (CAR).
- Addresses: [info@eraift-rdc.org](mailto:info@eraift-rdc.org) with a copy to [h.mishidi@eraift-rdc.org](mailto:h.mishidi@eraift-rdc.org),
- Subject: Application for a doctoral research scholarship "ERAIFT-AGRINATURA".
- Maximum file size to be sent: 10 Gb

Only complete and timely applications will be examined by a joint team of 6 people consisting of members of the Academic and Research Council (CAR) of ERAIFT and AGRINATURA, under the chairmanship of the Director of ERAIFT.

Only successful applicants will be notified.



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**9. Calendar - deadlines**

Dissemination of the call within the AGRINATURA consortium: July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021

Closure of the call and deadline for submitting files: August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Verification by the ERAIFT of the administrative admissibility of the files: between August 15<sup>th</sup> and August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Examination and selection of files: between August 20<sup>th</sup> and August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021

Planned starting date for doctoral theses: September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021

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