REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

ILIA STATE UNIVERSITY, TBILISI, GEORGIA invites you to express an interest for
The project Junior Scientist Position

Programme: Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme

Proposal Name: ESTABLISHING AND OPERATING AN INNOVATIVE MARINE TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER NETWORK FOR ENHANCING THE TRANSITION TO A SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY IN THE BLACK SEA BASIN (EFXINNOS)

Project Details:

EfxINNOs will jointly develop and operate a novel, cost-effective, technologically-advanced, sustainable network of marine monitoring platforms. This network will complement and enrich existing research infrastructures and serve the monitoring requirements of EU Policies (MSFD-Marine Strategy Framework Directive, MSP-Marine Spatial Planning, Biodiversity Strategy, Climate Change Action) and the Black Sea Integrated Monitoring Assessment Program (BSIMAP), linking the Black Sea Basin (BSB) and the North Aegean Sea (NAS).

A series of mobile and static platforms, autonomous underwater vehicles (microAUVs), remotely-operated vehicles (ROVs) and buoys, equipped with the appropriate physico-chemical sensors, side scan sonars and cameras will be operated, at selected pilot areas of ecological significance. These platforms will be collecting data, images and videos on the marine biodiversity from key benthic ecosystems of the Black Sea and the Northa Aegean Sea. EfxINNOs will correlate the dominant impacts of human activities with the health of benthic ecosystems to qualitatively and quantitatively assess the impact of each specific activity.

The project will implement transnational cooperation to fill the gaps in data collection, data harmonization and policy implementation among the BSB and the NAS. Project-produced data will be made interoperable and available to all EU Data Collection networks. Machine learning (ML) tools and Artificial Intelligence (AI) algorithms (mostly supervised and unsupervised image processing and object recognition techniques) will be used to analyze all collected data, images and videos to create benthic mosaics and assess the health indices of seagrass habitats. Any other object presents on the seabed (anchors, litter, pipelines, etc.) will also be identified with the above approach from the AUV-collected images.

EfxINNOs will develop a consistent and unified approach for the delineation, protection and restoration of the Black Sea ecosystems, assessing their ecological significance and prioritizing potential Marine Protected Areas. EfxINNOs results, images and videos will be widely communicated, raising public awareness on the abundance of marine litter at sea bottom, the impact of bottom trawling, man-made pollution and other activities affecting the seabed like shipping, submarine cables, wind turbines, etc. Educational material will be produced to inform people on the significance of coastal marine biodiversity protection. The network will produce science-based policy recommendations and tools serving the requirements of the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea.

EfxINNOs will establish a viable transnational network that will provide significant professional development opportunities for researchers, students and young professionals. It will enhance place-based development by supporting a sustainable path to Blue Growth, through the creation of a stimulating, inclusive and innovative learning environment. This will be achieved by carrying out a coherent set of Capacity development activities encompassing:

- Workshops on research methodologies and ML techniques.
- Training on advanced marine environmental monitoring instrumentation

- Collaboration between project teams in turning data into useful information for a wide array of Target Groups
- Encouraging the involvement of young scientists and professionals through their participation in joint training workshops and events
- Events, like the Concluding Conference, that will provide a platform for Partners to showcase achievements, network with diverse Target Groups and engage new stakeholders
- Joint policy briefs and Public Reports that highlight challenges and opportunities that entails a sustainable path to Blue Economy in the midst of the Ocean decade

Project Duration: 30 Months

Project Implementation Dates: 08/2024 - 03/2027

Coordinating institution: Democritus University of Thrace-School of Engineering

Other Implementing Partners:

- Union of Bulgarian Black Sea Local Authorities (UBBSLA) - Bulgaria
- National Institute for Marine Research and Development "Grigore Antipa" (NIMRD) — Romania
- Ilia State University (ISU) — Georgia
- Istanbul University (IU) — Türkiye
- Technical University of Varna (TUV) — Bulgaria

We are looking for a qualified and dedicated candidate for the role of Project Junior Scientist to join an international scientific research project focused on the physicochemical analysis of the Black Sea water. The successful candidate will collaborate with a senior scientist to process and analyze research data and contribute to fieldwork and the research process in Western Georgia.

Key Responsibilities:

- Collaborate with a senior scientist to process physicochemical data of the Black Sea water.
- Travel to the research site in Western Georgia as needed to collect water samples.
- Participate in the buy cleaning process as necessary.
- Assist in disseminating research information and results as part of the project's international communication efforts.

Essential Conditions

- The project Junior Scientist is estimated to be reimbursed by maximum 400 EUR Gross in equivalent to GEL in accordance to the project exchange rate set by the donor;
- The candidate must be currently enrolled as a PhD student in the field of Biology or Ecology;
- Ability to travel to the research site in Western Georgia, if necessary;
- The language of communication is English, including the language of the formal evaluation reports to be submitted to the coordinator. Therefore, a good command of English (minimum B2 level) is required;
- The candidate should not be the employee (neither academic nor administrative staff) of Ilia State University;
- Prior working experience in international and national research projects;
- Experience of working in a non-governmental organization working on environmental protection issues or with an international donor organization is an asset

Application Process

Application must include

- **Cover letter in English (max 2 pages)**;
- **CV/Resume in English**;
- **Proof of requested professional Experience** (recommendation letters or verification letter from the employing organization, stating candidate's involvement in international projects)
- Copy of Diploma or certification relevant to the position

The application should be submitted at development@iliauni.edu.ge by May 8th, 2025. Incomplete applications will be rejected at the very initial stage of assessment.

Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed.