

Together in the heart of Europe Training Plant Scientists ready for the Challenges of Global Change

We intend to set up a TRI-national EuropEan Mobility Programme in Plant Sciences (TREE) on the EUCOR European Campus,

Because plants are the cornerstone of modern life

As plants feed, dress and heal human beings. As plants provide the oxygen we need to live. As plants provide construction material for amenities. As plants regulate the climate and are at the heart of societal mutual aid. As society depends on resilient plants.

Because we are faced with global challenges,

we need food security for a growing human population, implying sustainable use of natural resources under altering climate conditions. We need to fix greenhouse gases to halt climate warming. And we need to move from fossil fuels to green fuels. All these challenges are intimately linked with an in-depth knowledge of plants.

Because highly qualified people trained in plant sciences are urgently needed

The education of young plant scientists is more than ever crucial to form the responsible actors of tomorrow.

To all students

Do you wish to address societal needs and to develop sustainable solutions?

Do you want to gain intercultural skills, a background in diverse national education systems, and to connect with researchers and industrial partners?

→ Take the opportunity and join the EUCOR European Campus, a pioneering project worldwide, as its universities are crossing the borders.

Plant scientists from five EUCOR Universities (Strasbourg, Colmar, Freiburg, Karlsruhe, and Basel) have united to set up a TRI-national EuropEan Mobility Programme (TREE Master of Plant Sciences), conscious of the fact that all complementary disciplines cannot be learned in one single place.

The TREE Mobility Programme follows a two-step strategy:

- 1) **Today:** Existing Master curricula open to students from EUCOR partner institutions. Students receive their Master degree from their home university and in addition a EUCOR certificate, documenting the units (ECTS) awarded by the partner universities, as an added value for international job opportunities.
- 2) **In the future:** Establishment of a joint trinational EUCOR Master programme in Plant Sciences.

The TREE Master Programme delivers major assets...

- The opportunity to compile a tailor-made, personal profile in plant sciences, to gain flexibility and adaptability in view of a globalised job market.
- A multi-lingual experience and exposure to the diversity of cultures.
- The access to novel means of learning.
- The increased visibility of an outstanding biology programme, covering the current environmental and societal challenges – including biotechnology, molecular biology, cell biology, ecology, viticulture, synthetic biology, plant-microbe interactions, using latest technologies, imaging and bioinformatics in integrated approaches from molecules to populations.

... and offers unique prospects

- Students can complement their home university courses with specific specialities.
- The programme optimises existing resources and releases teaching synergies.
- It promotes interactions between teachers, researchers and students from the 5 universities.
- It strengthens the trinational Upper Rhine region.

Achievements of the TREE and EUCOR consortium members so far

- Establishment of a continuous dialogue among EUCOR Plant Science consortium partners
- Review of current plant sciences study programmes at each institution
- Launch of a EUCOR Plant Science Master study website describing the offered «à la carte» plant science modules for students
- A survey among bachelor and master students in biology about their knowledge of EUCOR and their interest in a trinational master curriculum focused on plant sciences
- Identification of the challenges for the establishment of a tri-national Master programme in Plant Sciences

For some of the identified challenges and concerns, the consortium proposes solutions

- Counterbalancing the differing university term dates (start and end of terms) with projects taking place between terms
- Minimising student travelling by organising more lab/block-courses
- Tackling the language barrier by proposing more modules in English and by including, on the long-run, language courses for the day-to-day life
- Long-term dissemination of information to students with a regularly updated TREE Master website in three languages (German, French, English) hosted by e.g. EUCOR

Other implementation challenges will need a clear support from additional stakeholders (universities, student organizations, politicians, administration)

- Handling the varying ECTS requirements at the Master level
- Providing student housing/accommodation (e.g. related to block courses lasting for weeks or months)
- Facilitating sufficient refunds for the student travel expenses
- Assistance for the overall involved extra expenses for participating students

Our short to mid-term goals

- An Annual Eucor Plant Science Symposium for students and researchers. It will include science talks, posters, and alumni as ambassadors in e.g. industry and to provide attractiveness to Bachelor students. The organisation and venue will rotate each year among the partner universities. Lead for 2020: Prof. Dr. Ralf Reski, Freiburg University.
- The inclusion of additional partner institutions (e.g. U Freiburg Faculty of Environment and Natural Resources; KIT Campus Garmisch, Ecosystem research)
- Extending the proposed «à la carte» programme to non-plant disciplines (management, economy, law...) – taking advantage of existing EUCOR university partnerships

Our long-term vision for the next 5-year programme (2021-2023)

- To build a cohort of dedicated students actively studying plants sciences on the European Campus at various locations
- To put the Upper Rhine region and its EUCOR initiatives into Brussel's priorities as part of a European challenge
- To contribute to plant sciences with a strong community of students, teachers and researchers with a worldwide visibility as a unique EUCOR European Campus

Final meeting, Basel 1 July 2019

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