Call for Submissions:

Short-Term Research Visits

The Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies (IAMO) invites applications for four-week visits to conduct research at IAMO. These visits are offered within the framework of the project *Establishing a Geoinformation Centre for the Western Balkans* (GEO-WB6, www.geo-wb6.net), organized by the Agricultural University of Tirana (UBT) and IAMO. The research visits should align with the objectives of the project GEO-WB6, that is, to support the EU accession process of the Western Balkan countries regarding Chapter 11 (Agriculture and Rural Development) of the EU Acquis with geospatial data analysis.

Eligibility Criteria:

We invite students, lecturers, and professionals in agriculture, natural resource management, and related fields to apply for one of the research topics outlined below. Applicants must be affiliated with a university or public sector institution in one of the six Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia). Proven knowledge in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) or remote sensing, and fluent command of the English language are indispensable. All applicants are required to work full-time on their research project throughout their stay at IAMO.

What we offer:

- Four-week stay at IAMO in Halle (Saale), during **Sep. 01-26, 2025,** *or* **Oct. 06-31, 2025**
- Supervision by researchers of the Land Systems Group at IAMO (https://lsg.iamo.de)
- Access to IAMO's research infrastructure and academic network
- Free-of-charge accommodation in a single room at IAMO's guesthouse
- An allowance of 800 € for the period of the stay
- Transport costs from the Western Balkans to Halle (Saale), Germany, and back
- Excursions to nearby research institutions working on geoinformatics, agriculture, and environmental sciences

Application Procedure:

Please submit your CV, relevant certificates, and a motivation letter to geo-wb6@ubt.edu.al. All documents must be submitted in English.

In your motivation letter, please specify one of the six research topics you are interested in working on. The letter should:

- Describe your relevant experience and explain your motivation for choosing the selected topic.
- Include a four-week work plan, outlining key activities, methodological approaches, and the expected outcomes of your research.

The application deadline is **July 13, 2025**. Shortlisted candidates will be invited for an online interview in the second half of July 2025. We are committed to fostering an inclusive and diverse learning environment and strongly encourage women to apply. People with disabilities with equal qualifications are given preference.

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With support from
Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture
by decision of the German Bundestag

Topic 1: Extreme weather events in the Western Balkans

The Western Balkan is a hotspot of climate change, with adverse effects on agriculture and natural resources. In particular, increasing frequency and intensity of weather extremes are of growing concern amidst accelerating climatic changes. We invite for applications for a research project to compile historical data on weather extremes (floods, heatwaves, droughts, etc.) and projections of future extremes. This can include collecting and analysing meteorological records and reanalysis datasets, identifying trends, mapping local hotspots of extreme weather events, and a stock-taking of documented past impacts on agricultural production.

Topic 2: Climate change effects on water resources in the Western Balkans

Climate change in the Western Balkans is significantly affecting water supply and quality in rivers and lakes, thereby presenting considerable challenges for sustainable resource management. With this topic, we invite for applications for a study on the effects of climate change on local water resources, including historical trend analyses of data on rainfall and discharge, and predictions of future water availability. This can also include the development of recommendations for adaptation and future water management strategies.

Topic 3: Crop production in the Western Balkans

A clear understanding of crop production and its changes can inform decisions about future land-use and climate change adaptation. We invite applicants who would like to source and harmonize historical time series on production amount, yield and harvested area for the major crops in the region. This data should then be used to explore regional trends and yield gaps, and their relation to weather, soil, and management practices. Ideally, the collated data should finally be made publicly available as a published dataset or a dashboard.

Topic 4: Determinants of wildfire occurrence in the Western Balkans

Wildfires are an increasing threat to agricultural production and forestry in the Western Balkans and are expected to become more frequent and severe with climate change. The research under this topic should focus on analyzing remote sensing products, such as burned area maps and active fire data, to gain an overview of the spatial patterns of past wildfire occurrence and intensity in the region. By combining these data with land cover, soil, and climate information, this project should generate a better understanding of the spatiotemporal dynamics of wildfires in the region.

Topic 5: Analysis of existing high-resolution land-cover maps for the Western Balkans

Crop-type maps for the Western Balkans have only recently become available with the new High-Resolution Layers (HRLs) provided by the Copernicus Land Monitoring Service. We invite for applications for a project that will make use of the new HRLs and summarize these for the entire region for forests, grasslands, and croplands, including an analysis for the spatial patterns and changes of the 17 crop categories and fallow lands.

Topic 6: Biodiversity monitoring through Citizen Science in the Western Balkans

In the last years, the availability of crowd-sourced biodiversity monitoring data has greatly improved through the widespread adoption of citizen science platforms like iNaturalist or eBird. We invite applicants who would like to analyze the spatial coverage of the data collected on these platforms for particular taxonomic groups in the Western Balkans. This can include an assessment of different biodiversity indices, trend analyses, or a comparison to structured monitoring data.