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Introduction of the Ecotoxicologist Masters' degree at SZIU

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A wide range of environmental disturbances by human activities constitute massive threats nowadays to living organisms from individual levels to ecological systems. Consequently, it is becoming more and more important to educate experts capable of handling a wide range of environmental risks with a sound scientific and methodological background.

The above needs and the lack of concerted education in the region, justified the establishment of a relevant educational tool as a response. The Ecotoxicologist major was proposed, the first time in Hungary, in 2008 by Professor Gábor Bakonyi of the SZIU Department of Zoology and Animal Ecology in order to fulfil the above need. Since this proposal was accepted, the responsibility of coordination is taken by our department and the organizational tasks are also performed here.

The major comprises of four semesters supplemented by a practical week and a professional practical period of 4 weeks. The placement of the professional practical ranges over several types of partner organizations, from research institutes to companies interested in receiving our students, considered often as futures employees.

The list of subjects is very wide, covering sciences from toxicological and ecotoxicological nature to courses on environmental risk assessment, planning scientific projects and fund raising as well as scientific publication strategies. This way, our students obtain education on problems and possibly solutions all along different natural and anthropogenic food chains as well. The teachers of the courses were selected by merit, specialization and experience, so the proportion of external lecturers is rather high in this major.

Several of our students have gained prizes in National Scientific Students' Competitions.

Since its establishment in 2010, a new class of 11-17 students could be recruited every year. So the third class is preparing for graduation this December. So far, almost all of our graduates have succeeded in obtaining a job, most of them being employed in jobs relevant to their degree.

As for the future, we are confident in reserving the high standards of the education that should maintain the attraction of our degree. Furthermore, we hope to be able to introduce this major in English, so that we can extend this service to foreign students.

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