

EUROPEAN Ph.D. IN SCIENCE FOR CONSERVATION

EU Project -05-MEST-CT2005-020559, EPISCON

To promote the synergy between the cultural heritage field, natural sciences and engineering, the European Community's Marie Curie programme is funding the EPISCON - European Ph.D. in Science for Conservation. The goal of the project is to form and develop the first generation of "true" conservation scientists in Europe, a goal to be attained by providing education, training, and research opportunities in the field of science for conservation of cultural heritage to young researchers.

EPISCON started in September 2006 and makes an original contribution to national and Community policies, as well as to the already existing knowledge in the field. Recent years, the number of national and European institutions and bodies of various types supporting the development of conservation-restoration projects significantly increased, as well as the number of organisations and bodies that carry out conservation-restoration projects.

16 three-year fellowships have been offered by ten EPISCON partners' host institutions within the European Community - internationally distinguished European academic and conservation centres working in the field of cultural heritage preservation and research:

University of Bologna, Italy (UNIBO) - coordinator
School of Conservation (SoC), Denmark
Eotvos Lorand University (ELTE), Hungary
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), Greece
Universidad de Oviedo (UNIOVI), Spain
"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi (UAIC), Romania
University of Perugia (UNIPG), Italy
Instituut Collectie Nederland (ICN), The Netherlands
Hungarian National Museum (HNM), Hungary
Istituto Conservazione e Valorizzazione Beni Culturali (ICVBC), Italy

Four other centers are associated to the host institutions within the project:

Istituto Centrale per il Restauro (ICR), Italy
Institute of Atmospheric Sciences and Climate (ISAC), National Research Council (CNR), Italy
"Petru Poni" Institute of Macromolecular Chemistry (IPPMC), Romania
Opificio delle Pietre Dure (OPD), Italy.

The fellowships include funding of an intensive six month training at the University of Bologna - Ravenna Campus (Italy) in all aspects and levels of the conservation of cultural heritage, followed by a two and a half years research to be performed at one of the host institutions. These activities are finalized with the defence of a thesis to be recognised by the participating countries.

The 16 selected fellows are coming from all over the world, their home countries being Romania, Italy, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Japan, Canada, Denmark, Hungary, Spain, Poland, France and Greece. They graduated in different fields, i.e. chemical engineering/technology, geology, mechanical engineering, environmental management and science, physics, natural sciences, material science or civil engineering.

The training received by the young researchers will not only give them the opportunity of developing new skills in a particular form(s) of analysis, but also provide exposure to a multidisciplinary way of thinking and problem solving. These skills are essential for building a long-term research career in both conservation and scientific community.

The holistic multidisciplinary educational approach the PhD curriculum is based on, and the establishment of a common language among themselves and with the other professionals involved in conservation will allow newly trained conservation scientists to better work and share knowledge within an integrated conservation system.

Ana-Bogdana Simionescu
University of Oviedo
Oviedo, Spain

