



Eberswalde University
for Sustainable
Development

Biosphere Reserves Institute

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Our Privileged Partners

The Biosphere Reserves Institute builds on a longstanding experience of collaboration with various partners, especially the cooperation among the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development, the Michael Succow Foundation – a conservation NGO – and Nationale Naturlandschaft – the umbrella brand of Germany's large scale conservation areas. In 2022, these organizations signed a partnership agreement to further support and develop UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, in the framework of the Biosphere Reserves Institute.

A university on two campuses renowned for its strong sustainability profile

The Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development is, with its holistic approach to sustainability, its unique range of courses geared towards future-oriented topics and its strong institutional commitment to the field of sustainability research, a driving force for sustainable development. Around 2,300 students from about 60 nations study and more than 400 employees teach, research and work at the modern university. The mission of the HNEE is to lead the transformation towards a sustainable society by developing viable model solutions and equipping students with the necessary skills to shape the future.

For further information: → hnee.de/BRI



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Research, teaching and practice for sustainability

The Biosphere Reserves Institute was established by the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development with the intention to bundle all its activities concerning UNESCO Biosphere Reserves.

Biosphere Reserves – Places for learning

Biosphere Reserves are model regions and learning places for sustainable development. The network of Biosphere Reserves comprises over 700 sites globally. These sites are a key component of the UNESCO ›Man and the Biosphere‹ programme, which intends to reconcile people with nature.

Biosphere Reserves provide unique platforms for the research activities of Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development as well as activities to transfer the learning to practice. Since adopting its programmatic name in 2010, the University strives to fully embrace sustainability in all academic activities as well as in its facility management and outreach. In light of this ambition, it is a consistent next step for the University to link research, teaching and practice towards the UNESCO ›Man and the Biosphere‹ programme.

Our contribution

The Biosphere Reserves Institute stands for both an inter and a transdisciplinary approach. As such, it brings together the capacities and knowledge of different disciplines and actors. The Institute pools research, education and training related to the UNESCO ›Man and the Biosphere‹ programme into one central entity. A strong focus is placed on the co-production of knowledge with practitioners and actors in UNESCO biosphere reserves, as well as the transfer of research results to society.

As part of its networking function, the Institute supports and coordinates applied research and development projects, as well as events related with UNESCO Biosphere Reserves. The Biosphere Reserves Institute relies on funding from the state of Brandenburg (Germany). It is implemented in tight cooperation with biosphere reserves and relevant stakeholders, following three main lines of action:

1. an international **Master's programme** in Biosphere Reserves Management (BIOM),
2. a **Doctoral Programme** specialised in research in, for and with biosphere reserves; and
3. a **research group** to stimulate and coordinate research activities on Biosphere Reserves.

Master`s Programme

The international master`s programme ›Biosphere Reserves Management (M. Sc.)‹ aims at enabling students to effectively manage, support and develop Biosphere Reserves.

Learning to manage people and nature

Students learn to develop sustainability strategies by applying participatory and cooperative approaches. They gain knowledge on ecosystems and different concepts of land use in a context of unprecedented loss of biodiversity and natural resources under accelerated climate change and resulting uncertainty. Cultural and socio-economic challenges as well as opportunities are identified and reflected upon.

Admission requires a qualifying degree obtained in courses related to environmental or land use science. All applicants must provide proof of English proficiency. The full-time study programme is made up of four semesters. The final year consists of a research semester spent in a Biosphere Reserve and a semester dedicated to the master`s thesis.

The programme uses the current strategy of the ›Man and the Biosphere‹ programme, the Lima Action Plan, as a guiding principle. It emphasises three areas of competence:

Ecological and social systems

This topic deals with the understanding of complex and dynamic nature-human relations. This includes scientific, socio-economic and ethical aspects of sustainable land use.

Governance and management

The principles and tools of adaptive governance and management processes are pivotal for effectively developing Biosphere Reserves and successfully steering the transformation processes. Project management, monitoring and evaluation, as well as education for sustainable development represent important aspects of this area of competence.

Cooperation, communication and learning

The master`s programme enables graduates to act confidently in intercultural contexts and conflict situations. Approaches to effective communication and personal development are therefore an integral part of the programme.

Doctoral Programme

The Doctoral Programme started in 2019. Its mission is to promote multi-disciplinary doctoral research on Biosphere Reserves.



Photo: HNEE, Ulli Grabener

PhD Students presenting their research at the inauguration ceremony of the BRI

Solution-oriented multi-disciplinary research

The Doctoral Programme promotes applied research inside, with, about and for Biosphere Reserves around the world. Research topics refer to sustainability challenges and explore the role of Biosphere Reserves as model regions for sustainable development. The Graduate School supports researchers from all relevant disciplines and encourages networking and interdisciplinary exchange among its members.

A large network of practitioners and institutions

The Doctoral Programme benefits from a large partner network of Biosphere Reserves, academic institutions, political actors and practitioners. Researchers are encouraged to design research projects that address topics that are relevant to both practitioners and scientists.

One Doctoral Programme, two Universities

For the Graduate School, Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development has established a strong partnership with Leuphana University of Lüneburg, a pioneer in research for sustainability. Colleagues from both Universities jointly supervise the graduate researchers. The Graduate School`s location is at Eberswalde while Leuphana University offers additional doctoral courses and awards the doctoral degree.

Research Group

The Biosphere Reserves Institute aims at stimulating research on and for Biosphere Reserves.

Biosphere Reserves: living laboratories

Biosphere Reserves are established to explore pathways towards sustainability, making them the perfect sites for transformation research. They seek close cooperation between science and civil society, and foster mutual learning in an experimental environment. With the global network of Biosphere Reserves, UNESCOs ›Man and the Biosphere‹ programme contributes to implementing the global sustainability agenda (e.g. Sustainable Development Goals).

Ideal sites for sustainability research

For these reasons, Biosphere Reserves represent ideal sites for sustainability research. At Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development, so far over 100 students have dealt with Biosphere Reserves in their bachelor and master theses. In light of the transformation necessary, e.g. for a carbon neutral economy, there are still many knowledge gaps, so more practical research projects are needed. With regular meetings of all interested scientists of the University, we plan to align future research activities of the University with the UNESCO concept of Biosphere Reserves and the needs of Biosphere Reserves in Germany and globally. These meetings also assure coordination of research and the identification of funding opportunities.



Photo: HNEE, Oliver Brauner

20 years of ecosystem monitoring in the three biosphere reserves of Brandenburg.
→ lanuweb.fh-eberswalde.de/oeub