

UNESCO Chair on World Heritage and Biosphere Reserve Observation and Education

On September 6th 2016, the "UNESCO Chair on World Heritage and Biosphere Reserve Observation and Education" has been established by the UNESCO at the Heidelberg University of Education in the Department of Geography. The UNESCO Chair is the only one in Baden-Wuerttemberg; chair holder is Professor Dr. Alexander Siegmund.

The UNESCO Chair aims to promote the use of modern methods in environmental and sustainability research and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). These methods include digital geo-information technologies such as remote sensing and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as well as innovative laboratory and field methods to monitor, evaluate, and visualise environmental changes.

- **Profile and goal of the Heidelberg UNESCO Chair**

The Chair's main focus lies on UNESCO World Heritage Sites, biosphere reserves and other UNESCO related sites (e.g. geoparks). New approaches and methods of environmental research and communication will be developed and disseminated for their protection and mediation. The integrated use of digital geomedias, such as remote sensing data, as well as geo-ecological laboratory and field methods will contribute to the analysis, modelling, and visualisation of the UNESCO sites.

In this way, the UNESCO Chair promotes the preservation, management, and awareness for the universal value of these sites and landscapes. Furthermore, aspects of a modern environmental research will be linked with issues of environmental and sustainability education – according to the Chair's profile of "observation and education".

- **Profile of the Department of Geography**

The Department of Geography – Research Group for Earth Observation ('rgeo') manages and coordinates the UNESCO Chair on World Heritage and Biosphere Reserve Observation and Education at the Heidelberg University of Education. With its competence centres, the Department of Geography is assisted by two research and training centres to institutionalise its educational and research programmes: 1. the "GIS-Station, Centre of Competence for digital Geo-media", and 2. the "Geco-Lab, Centre of Competence for Geo-ecological Space Exploration". The UNESCO Chair is additionally embedded into an interdisciplinary combination of subjects, which is carrying out scientific, technical and socially relevant projects in research and teaching.

- **Background of the UNESCO Chair**

History

The UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme was established in 1992 by the UNESCO to implement the UNESCO's goals in education and science, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), as global development guidelines. The international network of currently 710 UNESCO Chairs in 124 countries with their special profiles in research and teaching contributes to this aim.

Objective

The objective of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chair programme is to build the capacities of higher education and research institutions through the exchange of knowledge and sharing by promoting mobility and the exchange of researchers, university lecturers, and students. Thus the UNESCO Chairs function as think tanks and 'bridge-builders' between the academic world, civil society, local people, research, and politics.

UNESCO Chairs in Germany

At this time, there are eleven UNESCO Chairs in Germany with different thematic focuses. The UNESCO Chair on World Heritage and Biosphere Reserve Observation and Education at the Heidelberg University of Education is the only one in the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg. In the recommendation of the German Commission for UNESCO this Chair was established within a perennial national and international application procedure resulting in an agreement between the UNESCO Paris and the Heidelberg University of Education.