Department of Botany and Biodiversity Research
Agroecology & Conservation Science
Rennweg 14 | A-1030 Vienna

OPEN CALL: PhD Position in Quantitative Agroecology and Biodiversity Modelling (EU-OLIVES)

We are seeking a highly motivated Predoctoral Researcher / PhD Candidate in quantitative agroecology, data integration and biodiversity modelling for the FWF-funded project EU-OLIVES ("Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in EU Olive Farming") at the University of Vienna, for a 36-month position from 1 February 2027 to 31 January 2030 (30 hours/week).

Host institution	University of Vienna, Department of Botany and Biodiversity Research
Main workplace	Vienna, Austria, with project workshops and research stays in project countries
Principal Investigator	Priv.-Doz. Dr. Bea Maas (bea.maas@univie.ac.at)
Position period	1 February 2027 (start date) to 31 January 2030
Working time	30 hours/week (75% project employment), fixed term for 36 months; doctoral training and degree-related activities are additional to the contracted hours
Application deadline	15 October 2026 (23:59 CEST)

PROJECT AND ROLE

EU-OLIVES is a three-year international research project integrating biodiversity, ecosystem-service, management, land-use, climate and stakeholder data from olive farming systems in Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal. It builds on ten major research initiatives and approximately 186 study sites and combines a pan-European database, advanced ecological modelling, targeted field case studies and decision support for biodiversity-friendly olive farming.

The PhD candidate will be a central member of the project team, with primary responsibility for data integration and modelling in Work Packages 1 and 2. We are looking for a quantitatively motivated ecologist who genuinely enjoys working with large, complex datasets and applying state-of-the-art analytical methods, while also being interested in spatial approaches and targeted field methods in ecology and conservation biology where scientifically appropriate. The position offers the opportunity to work in a highly collaborative international research environment.

CORE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Coordinate the acquisition of biodiversity data from the project's international partner network and environmental data from multiple, complementary data sources
- Develop and curate spatially explicit biodiversity and environmental datasets from the regions and countries hosting biodiversity data
- Design and implement transparent, reproducible workflows in R and/or Python for ecological and environmental data management and analysis, following best practices in metadata documentation, provenance tracking, version control, and open science

- Develop and apply advanced multi-scale statistical, species-distribution, hierarchical-community and scenario-based modelling frameworks to analyze taxonomic, functional and, where available, phylogenetic biodiversity and ecosystem-service indicators.
- Integrate relevant environmental and spatial information across scales and assess links between biodiversity, ecosystem services, management and sustainable olive-farming.
- Participate in project workshops and selected case-study fieldwork, coordinate closely with partners, and contribute to protocol harmonization and joint scientific decisions.
- Prepare a cumulative doctoral thesis with several publishable chapters and communicate results through manuscripts, conferences, project meetings and stakeholder-oriented outputs.

ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS

- A completed Master's degree or equivalent qualification in agro/ecology, conservation/ quantitative biology, biostatistics or a closely related field by the employment start date.
- Demonstrated experience with quantitative data analysis in R and/or Python through a thesis, research project, coursework or comparable work, together with strong motivation to deepen statistical and modelling skills.
- A careful and reproducible working style, including responsible handling of shared, partly unpublished and spatially sensitive research data.
- Very good English skills, sufficient for international collaboration and scientific publication.
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively, organize complex tasks reliably, communicate across disciplines and cultures, and undertake multi-week travel within Europe.

PREFERRED ASSETS

- Experience with GLMMs, Bayesian methods, joint species distribution or hierarchical community models, functional-trait analyses, causal inference or scenario modelling.
- Experience with GIS, remote sensing, spatial databases, SQL, Git, workflow tools or large and heterogeneous datasets.
- Familiarity with multi-taxon biodiversity data, bioacoustics, metabarcoding, trophic interactions, phylogenetic information or agricultural field research.
- Scientific presentations, publications, stakeholder engagement, science communication, a valid driving license, and Spanish or Italian language skills.

WHAT WE OFFER

- A fully funded three-year doctoral position in a societally relevant, highly interdisciplinary and international project.
- Close supervision by Priv.-Doz. Dr. Bea Maas and collaboration with an established network of researchers in ecology, agroecology and scientifically-based sustainable olive farming.
- A strong combination of data synthesis, advanced modelling, field research, publication opportunities and policy- and practice-oriented application.
- University research infrastructure, structured supervision, and integration into the Vienna Doctoral School of Ecology and Evolution, with access to doctoral training and project-relevant professional-development opportunities, including training in advanced statistics, scientific writing, open science, stakeholder communication and project management
- Salary and social benefits according to the University of Vienna collective agreement (praedoc, VwGr. B1). At 2026 rates, the 30-hour position corresponds to approximately EUR 2,832 gross per month; the applicable collective-agreement rate at the 2027 start date will apply.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION

Please combine the following documents into one PDF:

1. A short motivation letter of 1-2 pages explaining your fit with the project, quantitative background, research interests and availability. At the end of the motivation letter, please include a brief AI-use statement indicating whether generative AI or other AI-assisted tools were used in preparing any part of the application materials and, if so, for which purpose(s). Applicants remain fully responsible for the accuracy, authenticity and content of all submitted materials. If no such tools were used, a one-line statement to this effect is sufficient.
2. A concise tabular CV of no more than 3 pages, including education, relevant research or employment, methods and software skills, publications or presentations where applicable, and contact details for two referees.

Certificates, reference letters and a separate publication list are NOT required at the first stage.

Applications will first be screened against the advertised qualifications. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an online interview with a selection panel comprising the PI and members of the core EU-OLIVES project partner team; additional subject-matter expertise may be included where appropriate. The final selection decision will be made following the interviews, based on the overall fit with the position, demonstrated qualifications and experience, motivation, and project needs. Shortlisted candidates may also be asked to discuss a brief example of previous data work or complete a proportionate, time-limited analytical exercise.

The University of Vienna has an anti-discriminatory employment policy and values equal opportunities, the advancement of women and diversity. Qualified women are expressly encouraged to apply. Applicants with disabilities are welcome and may request reasonable accommodations in the selection process.

Scientific contact: Priv.-Doz. Dr. Bea Maas |Email: bea.maas@univie.ac.at

Project Information: https://doi.org/10.55776/PAT1944325

Further Information: https://www.beamaas.com/

Please submit the complete application as one PDF by 15 October 2026 to bea.maas@univie.ac.at, using the subject line "Application EU-OLIVES PhD – [Family name]"

Applications received after the deadline may not be considered.