

## **MASTER'S PROGRAM "REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT"**

### **INFORMATION PACKAGE**

***Professional Field: Earth Sciences***

***Master's Program: Regional Development***

***Educational and Qualification Degree: Master***

***Professional Qualification: Regional Development***

***Form and Duration of Study: Full-time, one year, 2 semesters***

The training in this specialty for the educational qualification degree "Master" spans two semesters with a total workload of 465 hours, corresponding to 60 ECTS credits in accordance with state requirements.

The specialty belongs to Professional Field 4.4 Earth Sciences. The training is conducted and administered by the Department of Geography, Ecology and Environmental Protection. The professional field, and specifically the Master's Program "Regional Development," is accredited until 2025. The department also conducts training for Bachelor's and Master's degrees, as well as Doctoral programs.

Students from all regions of the country and from abroad are enrolled. The instruction is conducted in Bulgarian.

The Training Provides:

- In-depth theoretical and specialized training in the field.
- Acquisition of the basics of research and applied scientific activity.
- Opportunities for student mobility under the Erasmus+ program, including international comparability of acquired knowledge and skills.
- Development of abilities to adapt in conditions of social, economic, and technological change.
- The program allows for the development of skills for:
  - Independent interpretation and application of acquired knowledge in practice-oriented situations.
  - Critical reception, understanding, and interpretation of theories and concepts, as well as factual support.
  - Solving specific tasks and making informed management decisions using acquired methods and techniques.
  - Application of logical thinking, creativity, and innovative approaches in solving non-standard problems.

The Master's Program "Regional Development" provides solid theoretical, methodological, and practical training that builds upon the knowledge and skills acquired at the Bachelor's level in Professional Field 4.4 Earth Sciences and other relevant areas (e.g., "Geography and Regional Policy," "Ecology and Environmental Protection," and "Pedagogy of Teaching Geography and History").

The achievement of the educational objectives is embedded in the structure and content of the curriculum. It spans two semesters and includes compulsory and elective courses.

Training in the compulsory disciplines ensures in-depth theoretical and practical preparation in the field of regional development and regional policy. It imparts knowledge, skills, and competences necessary for successful professional realization. Some courses provide qualifications on current issues related to contemporary societal development. Others are practically oriented and guarantee successful adaptation of future graduates to rapid social, economic, and technological changes. The curriculum includes disciplines that enrich the training of geography professionals with essential regional, social, economic, territorial planning, urban planning, and management knowledge and skills, thereby broadening the range of professional fields in which graduates may succeed.

The elective disciplines are linked to specific areas of applied regional planning and management. They enrich and expand students' competencies for the practical application of their knowledge.

- Students graduate after preparing and defending a Master's thesis.
- The Master's Program "Regional Development" prepares professionals for careers in all areas related to regional development and policy.
- The interdisciplinary nature of the program allows graduates to develop in various spheres of public life—in Bulgarian state and international institutions, non-governmental organizations, and others.
- The focus is placed on enhancing professional competence and developing skills for making strategic and tactical management decisions; working on management programs and strategic documents in the field of regional development; conducting independent specialized scientific research; and developing creative abilities for teaching and expert activities.
- Graduates acquire the knowledge and practical skills necessary for effective professional development:
- Understanding the main patterns and trends in regional development and policy in the context of a market economy, globalization, and digitalization of societal processes;
- Fundamental knowledge of the main areas in regional studies, spatial planning, urbanization, and economics;
- Knowledge and skills aligned with European standards for experts in regional policy and integration;
- Familiarity with the implementation of regional policies and strategies of the European Union;
- Development of team-working skills and attitudes for employment in various national and international institutions and NGOs.
- The Master's Program "Regional Development" provides a strong foundation for successful professional realization in all areas and activities related to regional development. Employment opportunities include all units and institutions dealing with regional development issues—on European matters concerning regional development and policy in both the public and private sectors.
- Graduates can pursue careers as:
- Specialists, experts, advisors, civil servants, and managers in units for managing regional development and policy at the central government level, regional (district administration), and local (municipal administration) levels of Bulgaria's administrative-territorial organization;
- Employees in the Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Environment and Water, Ministry of Social Policy, Ministry of Economy, and others;
- Professionals in NGOs, local initiative groups, and other organizations involved in local governance and/or regional development and policy;
- Researchers in academic institutions and universities in fields related to regional development and policy;
- Specialists in non-profit public organizations, chambers of commerce, corporate representative offices, foreign companies, or those with mixed ownership;
- Consultants in firms involved in drafting strategic documents in the field of regional development and policy, and in the development and management of projects at all levels.

Contact details:

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## CURRICULUM

### Master's Program: "Regional Development"

First Year			
First Semester	ECTS Credits	Second Semester	ECTS Credits
Fundamentals of Regional Development	6	Environmentally Friendly Territorial Management	4
Regional Analysis	6	Planning and Regional Policy	5
Application of Geographic Information Systems in Regional Studies	6	Project Management for Regional Development	3
Human Resource Development and Management	6	Elective Course 1 (from Group II)	3
Elective Course 1 (from Group I)	3	Master's Thesis Defense	15
Elective Course 2 (from Group I)	3		
<b>Elective Courses Group I</b> <i>Students choose two courses:</i>		<b>Elective Courses Group II</b> <i>Students choose one course:</i>	
Territorial Planning	3	Regional Policy and Local Self-Government	3
Regional and Settlement Infrastructure	3	Development and Management of Problem Areas	3
Development of Rural and Cross-Border Areas	3	Innovations and Regional Development	3
Urbanization Analysis	3	Non-Governmental Organizations and Regional Development	3
Regional and Geoecological Programs	3		
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

**Total for the entire period of study – 60 ECTS credits**

## **COURSE ANNOTATIONS**

### ***COMPULSORY COURSES***

#### **FUNDAMENTALS OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**ECTS Credits: 6**

**Semester: I**

**Assessment Method:** Examination

**Methodological Supervision:** Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

**Lecturers:**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emilia Patarchanova

e-mail: [emilia\\_patarchanova@swu.bg](mailto:emilia_patarchanova@swu.bg)

**Weekly Workload:** 3 lectures + 1

practical exercise + independent work

**Type of Exam:** Written

Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Gergana Nikolova

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##### **Course Annotation**

Fundamentals of Regional Development is a compulsory course for students enrolled in the Master's Program "Regional Development." The main objective of the course is to familiarize students with the scientific-theoretical and legal foundations of regional development and its connection to regional policy. Students acquire academic knowledge and competencies to analyze, organize, and plan activities related to regional development, manage its implementation, and address emerging challenges.

##### **Course Content**

The first part of the course is dedicated to the subject, tasks, and main objectives of regional development, as well as to processes related to economic, social, and territorial changes. The second part includes topics concerning regional development and regional policy in the EU and individual countries, systems of regional planning, mechanisms, tools, and policies applied in EU member states. Special emphasis is placed on familiarizing students with various strategic documents used in the field of regional development and regional policy within the European Union. The final part of the course is methodological in nature. Students are introduced to key methods for researching and analyzing regional development, as well as approaches for identifying existing spatial disparities in socio-economic, political, territorial, and cultural dimensions.

#### **REGIONAL ANALYSIS**

**ECTS Credits: 6**

**Semester: I**

**Assessment Method:** Examination

**Methodological Supervision:** Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

**Lecturers:**

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**Weekly Workload:** 3 lectures + 1

practical exercise + independent work

**Type of Exam:** Written

Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Gergana Nikolova

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##### **Course Annotation**

The lecture course is a compulsory subject for students enrolled in the Master's Program "Regional development."

The main goal of the course is to introduce students to the scientific-theoretical and methodological foundations of regional analysis. Through the topics presented and the knowledge acquired, students become familiar with the key methods used in regional studies for examining regional development. They learn about the approaches for identifying existing spatial disparities in the socio-economic, political, territorial, and cultural life of a given area.

The practical relevance of the "Regional Analysis" lecture course lies in providing students with academic preparation and competence in analyzing, organizing the planning process, and carrying out the overall activities related to regional development and policy, including management and problem-solving in the field.

### **Course Content**

At the beginning, students are introduced to the subject, tasks, and main objectives of regional development. The focus is placed on current issues of the regional economy such as: strengthening and structuring the regional economy under modern conditions; studying the spatial aspects of development, the patterns, principles, and factors of localization; determining the economic, social, and environmental efficiency of the territorial organization of production; the resource provision of territorial units, the protection and reproduction of the natural environment; analysis and assessment of territorial concentration, specialization, diversification of production, and the management of the economy of territorial units.

The second part is devoted to methods: economic-mathematical methods such as correlation analysis, graph theory, cluster analysis; heuristic methods in management, including fishbone diagrams, problem trees, morphological analysis, typological analysis of complex objects, and others.

The third part examines strategic planning and the methods associated with this process – SWOT analysis, STEP analysis, the Delphi method, brainstorming, the scenario method, as well as the modeling of economic and social processes, and more.

## **APPLICATION OF GIS IN REGIONAL STUDIES**

**ECTS Credits: 6**

**Semester: I**

**Assessment Method:** Examination

**Methodological Supervision:** Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

**Lecturers:**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Alexandra Ravnachka

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**Weekly Workload:** 3 lectures + 1

practical exercise + independent work

**Type of Exam:** Written

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### **Course Annotation**

The course "Application of GIS in Regional Studies" presents the general concepts behind the development and implementation of Geographic Information Systems (GIS). The lecture course builds upon the foundational GIS knowledge acquired in the undergraduate program, deepening the understanding of key theoretical directions.

The aim of the course is to provide specific knowledge about the emergence, application, and increasing role of GIS in the field of regional planning and the management of various territorial units. All content is directly oriented toward systems for mapping,

management, analysis, and decision-making support in the governance of geographic objects and territories with local or regional scope.

The practical exercises are designed to develop students' skills in working with GIS software – including structuring databases, digitizing cartographic content (vectorization), mastering interpolation algorithms for cartographic modeling, generalization, and other cartographic procedures, as well as conducting spatial (vector and raster) analyses.

### **Course Content**

Theoretical Foundations:

The studied material includes fundamental topics related to the construction and implementation of GIS, with a focus on regional development in Bulgaria. The course examines various fields of GIS application in regional planning, including economic development and planning, demographic planning, social planning, environmental management, territorial planning, and the development and planning of infrastructure networks. Special emphasis is placed on methods for representing three-dimensional objects and surfaces.

Of particular importance for students is the ability to perform geographic analyses using GIS in addressing different problems related to the management of the country's economic activities.

Students are placed in a realistic setting, where they are required to present their vision for creating a future GIS project aimed at managing a pre-defined territory and implementing it. The final outcome is a presentation of the developed topic by each student, followed by a discussion.

## **DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

**ECTS Credits:** 6

**Semester:** I

**Assessment Method:** Examination

**Methodological Supervision:** Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

**Lecturers:**

Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Vladimir Karadzhov

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**Weekly Workload:** 3 lectures + 1

practical exercise + independent work

**Type of Exam:** Written

### **Course Annotation**

The lecture course "Development and Management of Human Resources" is a compulsory academic discipline for students in the Master's Program "Regional Development." It introduces students to the scientific-theoretical and practical foundations of recruitment, management, evaluation, and appraisal of human resources.

Human capital is of leading value and significance for companies and municipalities in the current stage of economic development. Therefore, it is of particular importance for master's students to become familiar with the theoretical and practical approaches to human resource management..

### **Course Content**

The first section is dedicated to an introduction to human resource management in the European Union and in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The second section brings together topics that explain human resource management and human resource management systems.

The third section introduces master's students to topics related to the practical aspects of human resource management.

## ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY TERRITORIAL MANAGEMENT

**ECTS Credits:** 4

**Semester:** II

**Assessment Method:** Examination

**Methodological Supervision:** Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

**Lecturers:**

Prof. Dr. Stoyan Nedkov

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**Weekly Workload:** 2 lectures + 1

practical exercise + independent work

**Type of Exam:** Written

### Course Annotation

The course “Environmentally Friendly Territorial Management” is part of the curriculum for students in the Master’s Program “Regional Development.” It aims to provide knowledge about the principles and methods of applying the ecological approach in regional policy and territorial management. The topic is particularly relevant in the context of implementing the strategic concept of sustainable development and integrating its core priority—“Think globally, act locally”—into governance practices.

### Course Content

The course introduces students to the fundamental principles of environmentally sound territorial management and the experience of several European countries—relevant directives, conventions, systems and levels of governance, coordination of activities, and the specific tools for balancing ecological requirements with economic growth and social prosperity.

It also covers the methodology for creating databases and functional zoning maps of territories, as well as the justification of measures aimed at maintaining the required ecological condition of the natural environment.

## PLANNING AND REGIONAL POLICY

**ECTS Credits:** 5

**Semester:** II

**Assessment Method:** Examination

**Methodological Supervision:** Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

**Lecturers:**

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**Weekly Workload:** 3 lectures + 1

practical exercise + independent work

**Type of Exam:** Written

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### Course Annotation

The lecture course is a compulsory academic discipline for students enrolled in the Master’s Program “Regional Development.” The main goal of the course is to introduce students to the scientific-theoretical concepts of regional policy and the mechanisms of its planning. The applied value of the lecture course is related to the acquisition of competencies

by students in organizing, planning, and managing regional development and regional policy in administrative-territorial units at various hierarchical levels.

### **Course Content**

At the beginning, students are introduced to the subject, tasks, and objectives of regional planning and policy, the methodological aspects, and programming. The following topics are related to the main policies implemented within the European Union. Emphasis is placed on the National Cohesion Policy Framework, the National Strategic Reference Framework, and other strategic documents concerning regional development and policy in Bulgaria.

The course also focuses on the various operational programs and the complementarity between them. Part of the lecture material is oriented toward the necessity and essence of strategic planning, planning modeling, the purpose and scope of the strategic plan, the process of preparing the strategy (Development Plan), and monitoring its implementation.

Students also become familiar with and study in relatively greater detail the content of the main problems in planning and managing regional policy.

## **PROJECT MANAGEMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**ECTS Credits:** 3

**Semester:** II

**Assessment Method:** Examination

**Methodological Supervision:** Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

**Lecturers:**

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**Weekly Workload:** 2 lectures + 0

practical exercise + independent work

**Type of Exam:** Written

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### **Annotation**

The lecture course is a compulsory academic discipline for students enrolled in the Master's Program "Regional Development." The main objective of the course is to introduce students to the scientific-theoretical foundations of project management for regional development. The applied value of the lecture course lies in providing academic preparation and competence for master's students in analyzing, organizing, and planning the overall activities related to the management of a regional project.

### **Course Content**

The course is dedicated to projects and programs, as well as the phases of the project cycle, the basic principles, and the form or structure of projects and programs. The main part of the lecture material brings together topics that explain the logical framework, its matrix, the approach, and the stages of planning. Students become familiar with the complete development of the logical framework for planning complex interventions, along with its implementation and management.



## ***ELECTIVE COURSES***

### **TERRITORIAL PLANNING**

**ECTS Credits:** 3

**Semester:** I

**Assessment Method:** Examination

**Methodological Supervision:** Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

**Lecturers:**

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**Weekly Workload:** 2 lectures + 0

seminars + 0 laboratory work + 0 practical exercises

**Type of Exam:** Written

#### **Course Annotation**

The course "Territorial Planning" briefly presents spatial (territorial) planning as a necessary contemporary foundation for the proper development of settlement and non-settlement areas.

The goal of the lecture course is to provide students with the necessary minimum of systematized knowledge and some creative guidelines so that, in accordance with their specialization, they can participate in the complex process of planning and structuring settlements and their adjacent territories.

#### **Course Content**

Section I. Nature and tasks of territorial planning activities:

The lecture material includes a general overview of settlements, studying their elements and the non-settlement territories. Given the specifics of the specialization, the general planning structure and zoning of the territories are examined.

Section II. Spatial planning of settlement and non-settlement territories:

The main types of plans and project materials used for the planning, spatial design, and organization of settlement and non-settlement territories are presented. Emphasis is placed on the technologies for preparing and implementing the plans.

Section III. Implementation and control of spatial plans:

Students become familiar with the regulatory framework related to territorial planning, as well as with the stages of adoption, approval, and amendment of spatial plans.

Given the specifics of the discussed topics, the lecture material is supported by numerous practical examples, including real-life projects.

### **REGIONAL AND SETTLEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE**

**ECTS Credits:** 3

**Semester:** I

**Assessment Method:** Examination

**Methodological Supervision:** Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

**Lecturers:**

Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Vladimir Karadzhov

**Weekly Workload:** 2 lectures + 0 seminars +

0 laboratory work + 0 practical exercises + independent work

**Type of Exam:** Written

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### **Course Annotation**

The course is an elective for students enrolled in the Master's Program "Regional Development."

The main objective of the lecture course is to introduce students to the conceptual content of the terms used, the characteristics, importance, and development of infrastructure, the classification of regional and settlement infrastructure, and its practical application.

From a practical perspective, the course provides master's students with competencies in analyzing, assessing, organizing, and planning the overall management of regional and settlement infrastructure.

### **Course Content**

The first module is dedicated to the economic essence, content, and scope of infrastructure, its classification, types, methodological tools for studying and analyzing infrastructure, management, and efficiency.

The second module brings together topics that clarify the role of infrastructure in urban planning and development.

The third module introduces master's students to the comprehensive development of technical, social, market, recreational, industrial, and ecological infrastructure.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AND CROSS-BORDER AREAS**

**ECTS Credits:** 3

**Weekly Workload:** 2 lectures + 0 seminars +

**Semester:** I

0 laboratory work + 0 practical exercises + independent work

**Assessment Method:** Examination

**Type of Exam:** Written

**Methodological Supervision:** Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

**Lecturers:**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emilia Patarchanova

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### **Course Annotation**

The academic discipline is focused on providing theoretical and practical knowledge related to the planning, development, and management of two types of functional regions. It builds upon the knowledge and skills acquired at the bachelor's level and provides specialization for future master's students in regional studies, as well as in the management and planning of rural and cross-border areas.

Students who complete this course will be able to characterize and analyze the existing hierarchy in the territorial organization of regional planning for the needs of rural and cross-border areas. They will be able to propose alternatives for solving problems described in the municipal development plans in their regional sections. They will be able to work in teams, develop competitive solutions to a given problem or topic, and produce textual and cartographic products for public administration authorities and businesses. They will be capable of providing forecasts for various areas of regional development and proposing competitive alternative solutions.

### **Course Content**

The lecture material is structured in two sections. The first is dedicated to rural areas. The topics introduce students to the essence, specific characteristics, and the different nuances

in the meaning of the term "rural areas," both in a historical and territorial context. From a theoretical perspective, sets of indexes, indicators, and criteria for the classification of rural areas are examined. Attention is paid to the national characteristics of these territories in different EU member states. Some of the topics are oriented toward the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the Rural Development Policy (RDP), and the regional policy of the EU. The emphasis is placed on their impact on the development of rural areas. Students become familiar with the main program documents regulating these Union policies and study the experience of different EU countries in RDP and regional policy.

The second section is dedicated to the issues of border regions. It traces the history of their emergence and establishment in the policy and practice of the EU, their significance for European integration and integrated territorial development. Emphasis is placed on their main characteristics and the measures for territorial cooperation. EU programs for territorial cooperation and integrated development are studied. The European and Bulgarian theory and practice related to the development and management of border regions and processes are summarized, with special focus on the experience of leading European countries in this field.

## **URBANIZATION ANALYSIS**

**ECTS Credits: 3**

**Semester: I**

**Assessment Method:** Examination

**Methodological Supervision:** Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

**Lecturers:**

Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Vladimir Karadzhov

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**Weekly Workload:** 2 lectures + 0 seminars +

0 practical exercises + independent work

**Type of Exam:** Written

### **Course Annotation**

The lecture course is an elective academic discipline for students enrolled in the Master's Program "Regional Development." The main goal of the course is to introduce students to the scientific-theoretical foundations of settlements and the analysis of their spatial structure. The macrostructure of the lecture course includes three modules. The applied significance of the course "Urbanization Analysis" lies in providing academic preparation and competence for master's students in analyzing and organizing the planning of the overall activity of a settlement of various categories, its management, and the resolution of its urbanization issues.

### **Course Content**

The first module is dedicated to the subject, tasks, and main goals of settlement development, including aspects such as the sustainability of emerging processes during expansion, the design, and application of planning norms.

The second module brings together topics that explain the localization actions related to residential planning, green spaces, cultural and historical heritage, sports and recreation, social services, technical infrastructure and facilities, residential zones, and central urban areas—within the context of environmentally friendly planning of the settlement environment.

The third module introduces master's students to the planning and dimensioning of non-urbanized territory—agricultural, forested, disturbed areas, and territories occupied by technical infrastructure.

## REGIONAL AND GEOECOLOGICAL PROGRAMS

**ECTS Credits:** 3

**Weekly Workload:** 2 lectures + 0 seminars +

**Semester:** II

0 laboratory work + 0 practical exercises + independent work

**Assessment Method:** Examination

**Type of Exam:** Written

**Methodological Supervision:** Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

**Lecturers:**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emilia Varadinova

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### Course Annotation

The academic discipline “Regional and Geoecological Programs” provides students in the Master's Program “Regional Development” with knowledge and competencies related to current European and national programs focused on territorial development, various types of functional regions, urbanized areas, and more. Special attention is given to the regional and ecological approaches in regional policy and territorial management. The subject matter is particularly relevant, as it is connected to the implementation of the sustainable development concept through successful best practices aligned with the principle “Think globally, act locally.”

### Course Content

The course familiarizes students with the main characteristics of regional and geoecological programs at both European and national levels, the principles of environmentally friendly territorial management, and the potential of these programs to influence regional development and policy.

In a practical context, the course discusses the experience of European countries in implementing such programs and their effects on specific territories, as well as their evaluation by beneficiaries. It explores the approaches and tools for combining ecological requirements with economic growth and social prosperity.

## DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF PROBLEM AREAS

**ECTS Credits:** 3

**Weekly Workload:** 2 lectures + 0 seminars +

**Semester:** II

0 laboratory work + 0 practical exercises + independent work

**Assessment Method:** Examination

**Type of Exam:** Written

**Methodological Supervision:** Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

**Lecturers:**

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### Course Annotation

The course builds upon the knowledge and skills acquired at the bachelor's level, providing specialization for future master's students in regional studies focused on problem areas, with an emphasis on the management and forecasting of the most important socio-economic processes in public life.

Problem-oriented regionalization is a specific method that is expected to find increasing application in the practice of regional development in Bulgaria at all levels. It is a component of modern regional policy and its scientific grounding. The course incorporates foreign experience, particularly regional socio-economic research with a problem-based orientation in EU countries. It discusses common problem-oriented regional schemes for the European Union and also pays attention to national specifics and policies in individual EU member states.

### **Course Content**

Thematically, the course is divided into three main sections. The first is theoretical and introduces students to the essence, principles, and approaches of problem-oriented regionalization. The second section focuses on understanding the experience and policies related to the development of these informal territorial communities in the European Union. The final section examines in more detail the Bulgarian context, including historical legacy, contemporary theoretical foundations, and practical solutions related to problem-oriented regionalization in Bulgaria.

A central place in the course is dedicated to socially significant socio-economic issues and their regional investigation within the country. Students acquire knowledge of the products of regional policy and planning for the development and management of the country and its regions—both in the past and today. The processes of planning, development, and management of regions at different territorial levels (according to the NUTS classification) are thoroughly examined, with special attention to target areas – their types, territorial scope, and content characteristics.

## **INNOVATIONS AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**ECTS Credits:** 3

**Weekly Workload:** 2 lectures + 0 seminars +

**Semester:** II

0 laboratory work + 0 practical exercises + independent work

**Assessment Method:** Examination

**Type of Exam:** Written

**Methodological Supervision:** Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

**Lecturers:**

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### **Course Annotation**

The lecture course is an elective academic discipline for master's students majoring in "Geography." The main goal of the course is to introduce students to the scientific-theoretical and practical foundations of innovations and technology transfer in the context of regional policy development. The macrostructure of the course includes three modules.

The applied significance of the lecture course "Innovations and Regional Development" lies in providing academic preparation and competence for master's students in analyzing, organizing, and planning the overall process of implementing and managing innovations and technology transfer.

### **Course Content**

The first module is dedicated to the economic essence, content, and scope of innovations in the EU and in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The second module includes topics that explain the transfer and application of new technologies, cooperation between the science and technology sector and business, measures for implementing innovation strategies at the regional level, financial and non-financial instruments, as well as the competitiveness of Bulgarian enterprises.

The third module introduces master's students to enhancing knowledge and innovation for growth, innovations in underdeveloped areas, project financing, subsidies for science and technology projects, SME subsidies, and the stages of implementing a financial scheme for an innovation project.

## **NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**ECTS Credits:** 3

**Weekly Workload:** 2 lectures + 0 seminars +

**Semester:** II 0 laboratory work + 0 practical exercises + independent work

**Assessment Method:** Examination

**Type of Exam:** Written

**Methodological Supervision:** Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

**Lecturers:**

Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Gergana Nikolova

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### **Course Annotation**

The lecture course is an elective academic discipline for students enrolled in the Master's Program "Regional Development." The main goal of the course is to introduce students to the nature and conditions for the emergence and functioning of NGOs in relation to the implementation of regional policy aimed at successful regional development. The course is structured into four sections.

The applied significance of the lecture course "NGOs and Regional Development" lies in providing master's students with academic preparation, competencies, and skills for understanding the important interrelation between the development of the civil sector and democratic regional development, in line with solving contemporary social issues. The course also familiarizes students with standards for good governance in civil society organizations.

### **Course Content**

The first module focuses on clarifying the role, importance, goals, and means of achieving them within NGOs. A key part of the content is the argumentation of the "civil sector" component in regional development as an example of a democratic vision of modern society.

The second module examines the structural model and functions of NGOs in the context of regional development. It includes an introduction to the Law on Non-Profit Legal Entities and the legal framework for NGOs.

The third module introduces students to the different types of NGOs, emphasizing the differences among civic organizations based on the nature of their activities—those addressing short-term issues, human rights, and their regional scope, among others. The goal is to highlight the practical application of NGOs in regional development, taking into account their available resources and influence on the implementation of local and regional policies.

The fourth module explores the interactive connections between NGOs and contemporary requirements for regional development. It presents in detail the development requirements of the civil sector in relation to modern information technologies and marketing concepts, which are aligned with the goals of NGOs.