**Arqus Karst and Speleology Summer School 2023**

**Call for Applications**

The war in Ukraine has been a major challenge for Ukraine's EU integration efforts. The conflict pushed millions of people to leave their homes and resulted in devastating destruction of country’s infrastructure. Despite these difficulties, Ukraine has made progress in reforming its economy and strengthening its institutions. The war has also strong influence on creation the new generation of Ukrainians, who are committed to European values and willing to fight for their country's future.

The Ukrainian government has set the goal of becoming a member of the European Union. This is a long-term project that will require significant changes, but still it is achievable. The benefits of EU membership are clear: increased trade, investment, and economic growth. Membership would also bring political stability and security to Ukraine.

The road to European integration is not easy, but it is worthy of pursuing. For Ukraine, the benefits are clear: greater prosperity, an increase of security, and admittance of democracy for its people.

The outbreak of the war also disrupted education at all levels, including academic ones. In addition to the great damage to the infrastructure, employees, and students were cut off from the normal educational process, academic mobility, and, which is very important for students of natural sciences, internships, and field exercises.

Last year we organized the first edition of the International Summer School of Karst and Speleology in Polish Kraków-Częstochowa Upland, with the participation of students from Ukraine and Poland. The classes were conducted by lecturers from Poland, Ukraine, and Italy. The school turned out to be a great success. The reports of students, including those in the national media, were enthusiastic. For these reasons, we decided to continue the summer school idea, however in a larger formula with the participation of students from universities associated with the Arqus European University Alliance.

The summer school will take place from 16 to 23 July in Wrocław (Lower Silesia), and Siedlce near Złoty Potok (Kraków-Częstochowa Upland), and expecting to host 24 participants. The focus of the school is on “Caves and karst areas as unique time capsules that allow to reach both past and future environments of the Earth, including their protection resulting from the threats related to anthropopressure and global warming”.

During the five days of school, participants will have the opportunity to attend lectures, practical classes, and field trips.

During classes and lectures, participants will learn about the methodology of conducting research in caves and karst areas, including the methodology of archaeological and paleontological excavations, and the search for fossils. They will learn the principles of documentation, cataloging, and preparation of animals’ remains. Methodology of conducting research related to the geomorphology and geology of caves and karst areas, geophysical measurements, spatial data processing, and learning the basics of using free GIS programs, geological and geomorphological mapping using spatial data-point clouds from photogrammetric imaging of the terrain using the SfM method and the LiDAR digital terrain model with creating GIS databases. It will included also methodological aspects of speleological research focused on the origin and evolution of caves and kart areas, with topics related to active and passive protection of karst areas.

All participants must bring appropriate field clothes, including those that can be used in the caves (galoshes, headlamps).

As part of the school, a trip to the most important caves and open archaeological and paleontological sites in the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland with a short visit to the city of Kraków is planned.

During the school, participants will have the opportunity to open discussions, exchange views and integrate their skills. And for students from Ukraine, it will also give them a chance to promote their country and its European aspirations. Candidates should come from among students of biology, geography, geology, archeology, and environmental protection.

In order to apply for the Summer School, all interested are obliged to submit a 500-word abstract regarding one of the following topics: karst, archeology, paleontology, or drift geology in your home country. The selection of students will be carried out by the organizers. **All applications must be sent by the 30th of April to the following email address: paleosummerschool@uwr.edu.pl.**

 The participants will be required to give a presentation on a chosen subject during their stay to complete the School.

Bearing in mind safety matters, all participants are demanded to:

* be vaccinated against tetanus (valid vaccination);
* possess liability and accident insurance;
* inform the organizers about allergies and diseases;
* be in good physical condition.

Please note that only 2 candidates might be accepted from each partner institution.

The program covers all expenditures associated with traveling to and staying in the school location, including meals and accommodation. Participants will be provided with pocket money to cover public transportation costs etc.

In the name of the Organizers