**PhD position: ‘The Functions of Multilateral Environmental Agreements: Beyond Effectiveness as Implementation’**

**Deadline**

4 June 2023 **Location**  
Heerlen, the Netherlands

JOB DESCRIPTION

Are you ready for the start of your academic career? Do you want to become part of an enthusiastic group of colleagues, who seek to push the boundaries of environmental knowledge and teach in the highest graded educational programmes in the Netherlands? Do you have the right skills to do cutting-edge research in an interdisciplinary setting? Then apply for a PhD position in the project ‘The Functions of Multilateral Environmental Agreements: Beyond Effectiveness as Implementation’ at the Department of Environmental Sciences at the Open Universiteit.

Today, we are faced with pressing global environmental problems, of which climate change and biodiversity loss are key. To tackle these problems, rule setting at the international level is of great importance. That is why many multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) have been put in place over the past 50 years. Think of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), for example.

However, MEAs are often criticised for not being effective enough. Biodiversity loss is progressing at alarming rates and climate change is far from under control. Still, practically all MEAs once created continue to exist, including the CBD and UNFCCC, and regularly new ones are added. It is therefore important to look beyond effectiveness and improve our understanding of other functions of MEAs such as facilitating learning, involving stakeholders, establishing order by assigning roles to actors, identifying emerging issues and framing them, or symbolic functions.

In this PhD project, you will scrutinise various MEAs to identify their functions and to answer the questions of how and why these functions came about. With the results of this research, you will contribute important new insights to the academic literature on global environmental governance. Moreover, you will also provide the necessary policy recommendations for those working in MEA secretariats or as country negotiators, stimulating reflection on their work, which could lead to improvements of organisational routines.

The project will involve conducting a (systematic) literature review, building a theoretical framework, studying a list of all MEAs (including those under negotiation) and selecting those to look at in greater detail. Methods to apply can be both qualitative and quantitative (e.g. case studies, process tracing, qualitative comparative analysis, surveys, text mining, etc.).

As a PhD researcher in this project, you will be able to contribute to broader academic and societal debates on the role that global environmental governance could and should play in the various systems transitions that have to be realised, in terms of energy, nature, agriculture, water, infrastructure, health, etc. In this context, we need to know more about what MEAs do and don’t do and why, and that is what you can find out!

**Tasks**  
The PhD candidate will:

* engage in supervised scientific research that will ultimately result in a doctoral thesis;
* participate in the relevant activities of the “Innovating for Resilience” programme and the Department of Environmental Sciences;
* participate in the organisation of scientific and practice-oriented events (workshops, conferences), in close collaboration with the supervisors;
* follow a tailor-made course programme for PhD-candidates of the OU Graduate School and the National Research School SENSE;
* publish research results in the form of conference papers, contributions to peer-reviewed scientific journals, as well as through popular publications and presentations.

REQUIREMENTS

Candidates must:

* have a Master’s degree in a relevant field: political science, international relations, environmental governance, international environmental law, or the like;
* have experience with or a strong interest in multilateral environmental agreements and their effectiveness, (systematic) literature review, case study research, process tracing, qualitative comparative analysis, surveys, text mining;
* be able to demonstrate excellent scientific writing and communication skills, as well as relevant collaborative and social skills;
* have experience working in an interdisciplinary team;
* be fluent in English (spoken and in writing).

Applicants must be strongly motivated for doctoral studies, possess the ability to work independently and perform critical analysis and also possess good levels of cooperative and communicative abilities. Teaching experience and publications are not required but are considered an advantage if the candidate can demonstrate experience in these areas.

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

**Fixed-term** contract: for a period of 15 months. The appointment will be extended to 4 years when progress and performance are good.

The salary is determined in accordance with salary scale P of Appendix A of the Collective Labour Agreement of Dutch Universities and amounts to € 2.541,= gross per month upon commencement, in case of full employment.

The Open Universiteit provides good secondary benefits such as training, mobility, part-time employment and paid parental leave.

EMPLOYER

**The Open Universiteit**

**Flexible studying anywhere in the Netherlands and Flanders (Belgium)**  
The Open Universiteit is the part-time university in the Netherlands. Students follow personalised and activating academic distance education and disciplinary research is carried out within the various fields of science. Students can complete bachelor and master programmes, but also shorter programmes. The characteristics of education are openness, flexibility and quality (see [www.ou.nl/rankings](http://www.ou.nl/rankings)). The Open Universiteit has over 17,000 students and more than 750 employees. The OU has branches in the Netherlands and Belgium (see [www.ou.nl/studiecentra](http://www.ou.nl/studiecentra)). The main office is located in Heerlen. The latest technologies and educational insights are applied both in the bachelor's and master's programmes and courses and in projects and programmes with partners. Nationally and internationally, the OU plays an important role in the innovation of higher education. Education is interwoven with research, which also ensures that the current state of science is incorporated. The Open Universiteit invests not only in disciplinary research in nine scientific fields, but also in research in a multidisciplinary programme: Innovating for resilience.

FACULTY & DEPARTMENT

**Faculty of Science**

The faculty of Science is one of the six faculties of the Open Universiteit. Education, research and valorisation are the main tasks. The faculty offers academic bachelor and master programmes in the fields of Computer Science, Information Science and Environmental Sciences. The faculty’s research programme focuses on Innovating for Resilience. Furthermore, the faculty is partner in the Center for Actionable Research of the OU (CAROU). The faculty has PhD students who conduct research on various current topics within the research programme. As a result of the interdisciplinary focus on education and research, as well as the close link with practice, work at our faculty provides many innovative and challenging opportunities for entrepreneurial researchers.

**Department of Environmental Sciences**  
The Department of Environmental Sciences is part of the Faculty of Science. The Department embodies the commitment of the Open Universiteit to excellence in the environmental sciences, science for impact, and lifelong learning in the sustainability domain. The Department brings together people working on integrated environmental modelling, sustainability learning, and environmental governance and has about 20 team members. The research of the Department aims to contribute to the understanding of social-ecological systems, the development of solutions for environmental issues, and to the wider body of knowledge that helps societies reach their sustainability goals.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more information about this vacancy you can contact: Dr. Lisanne Groen, e-mail: [lisanne.groen@ou.nl](mailto:lisanne.groen@ou.nl).

NOTICE: please note that the email address mentioned above is provided for obtaining information about this vacancy.

For additional information about the OU and the Faculty of Science, you can visit our websites <https://www.ou.nl/> and <https://www.ou.nl/en/faculteit-betawetenschappen>. For more information regarding the Department of Environmental Sciences, see: <https://www.ou.nl/en/onderzoek-natuurwetenschappen>.