

External Job Announcement Reg.-Nr. 5-13320/25-D

The Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Natural Sciences Faculty I, Institute of Biology, General Zoology invites applications for a

PhD position (m/w/d)

within the project

„**FormiDable** - Function, Diversity and Evolution of formicine ant venom peptides“

The position is fixed term (65% according to TV-L 13, for 36 months) and **starting on the 01.06.2026 (or as soon as possible)**.

Project description:

Venomous animals and the **venoms** they wield are a remarkable example of repeated evolution. In preliminary work, we have discovered so far unknown venom peptides in the highly acidic, formic acid containing venoms of non-stinging ants of the subfamily Formicidae (genus *Camponotus*). Aim of this project is to assess the diversity of these **peptides** in additional **Formica** and **Lasius** ant species, to manually annotate these peptides in genomes, to investigate the evolution of these peptides, and to investigate their potential biological function. To achieve this aim, in this interdisciplinary project within the Priority Program “[GEvol: Genomic Basis of Evolutionary Innovations](#)”, we combine organismic (**Simon Tragust**), comparative genomic and transcriptomic (**Barbara Feldmeyer**) as well as analytical chemistry (**Timo Niedermeyer**) know-how and methods.

We require:

We are seeking a highly motivated candidate with an inquisitive, solution-oriented and frustration-tolerant mind that has excellent organisational skills to independently plan and conduct as well as analyse chemical, genomic and transcriptomic work. The following qualifications are required:

- Applicants must hold a Scientific University degree (MSc/Diploma) in biology, biochemistry or related fields
- Prior knowledge and/or experience with techniques and analyses involved in either proteomics, transcriptomics and/or genomics of insects (DNA/RNA extraction and analysis, next-generation sequencing, bioinformatics, HPLC)
- Driver's license and/or experience with insect maintenance and dissection is a plus
- Fluency in English (lab working language) with good communication and social skills

We offer:

- A friendly and inspiring working atmosphere in a young research group (for more information check out: https://www.zoologie.uni-halle.de/allgemeine_zoologie/staff/tragust/). The prospective PhD will be hosted in the lab of Simon Tragust (Halle) and will work in close collaboration with Barbara Feldmeyer (Frankfurt, <https://www.senckenberg.de/en/research/institutes-overview/sbikf-institut/sbikf-ag-molecular-ecology/>) and Timo Niedermeyer (Berlin, https://www.bcp.fu-berlin.de/pharmazie/faecher/pharmazeutische_biologie/team/professoren/niedermeyer/index.html)

- The group is embedded in the Department General Zoology sporting excellent, state of the art research facilities in the delightful, historic city of Halle with good and affordable living conditions and good connections to e.g. Berlin (~1h by train), Leipzig-Halle airport (~15min by train) or Frankfurt (~3h by train)
- A project that will help to develop and foster the applicant's academic profile combining diverse techniques in an interdisciplinary project.

Application:

Please submit your full application in English with registration number Reg.-Nr. **5-13320/25-D** until **30th of January 2026** via e-mail as a single PDF to simon.tragust@zoologie.uni-halle.de. For informal queries about the position or the project please contact Dr. Simon Tragust (simon.tragust@zoologie.uni-halle.de). Applications should include a cover letter detailing their motivation to join the project against the background of their research interests and experience, a CV, certificates (MSc/Diploma) and the names and email addresses of two potential referees. Interviews of applicants will take place in February/March.

The Martin-Luther University Halle-Wittenberg gives priority to applications from severely disabled candidates with equivalent qualifications. Women are particularly encouraged to apply. Applicants with a degree that was not obtained at a German University must apply for a certificate assessment for foreign university qualifications (Statement of Comparability for Foreign Higher Education Qualifications) from the Central Office for Foreign Education (<https://www.kmk.org/zab/central-office-for-foreign-education>), before signing a contract with the Martin-Luther University. Beware that obtaining this certificate may take up to three months.

The position is offered with reservation of possible budgetary restrictions.