Vacancy Research Assistant (PhD position, 1 year, 100%) in Political Science

Project: social media & Belgian politics

Information about the position

Faculty of Philosophy and social sciences, Department of political science
Centre d’étude de la vie politique (Cevipol)
Director : Frédéric Louault
Promotor : Caroline Close

Title of the position: Research Assistant (PhD position)
Type of contract : 1 year contract
Length of contract : 12 months, with a possibility to extend it to a 4-year PhD grant
Full time (100%)
Funding : ULB seed-money
Salary: about 2,100 euros/month (net salary)

The Department of Political Science at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) is hiring a research assistant with a specialization in social media analysis and Belgian politics. The candidate will be working within the framework of a project that aims to analyze the online communication of political actors in Belgium on social media platforms. The candidate will also closely cooperate within the framework of the EOS project “NotLikeUs” which focuses on horizontal affective polarization among citizens and vertical political dissatisfaction with politicians, their causes and consequences.

Context of the project

Nowadays, social media have developed into powerful tools of political communication for individual politicians, political organizations, journalists and citizens, both internationally and in Belgium. The project aims to analyze more systematically political actors’ online communication in Belgium (in the Dutch and French-speaking communities), both during and beyond official election campaign periods. At the empirical level, the project aims to monitor the social media posts of the key political actors in Belgium (parties, ministers and party presidents at the regional and federal level) and user engagement statistics of citizens (shares, comments, likes). At the theoretical level, the project aims to advance our understanding of the strategies and ideological movements within the political sphere and public opinion. Among other research questions, the project will deal with:

(1) What are the patterns in the online political communication of the various political actors in Belgium on social media platforms (especially, Facebook and Twitter) and how do they link back to theoretical on political communication (such as personalization, framing theory, incivility in political communication, negative campaigning)?

(2) With whom do political actors interact on these social media platforms? To what extent do political parties address other parties/politicians and/or journalists?

(3) What patterns can be discern based on citizen engagement with the posts by political actors? Do we find differences between different types of parties in this regard? How emotional are citizen reactions to political posts? How can we explain citizen engagement with political posts based on party type/topic and other key variables?
Job description

This is a call for applications for a full-time position as a research assistant for one year, with a possibility to extend it to a four-year PhD grant. In that purpose, the candidate will be asked to develop a doctoral research project dealing with one or several of the above-mentioned research questions, and to apply for a PhD grant (FNRS) during the year.

The project offers a stimulating working environment in a dynamic and international research team. The project involves both senior and junior researchers who work in the field of Belgian politics, political communication, party politics and/or public opinion using a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods.

The candidate will be based at the Cevipol (ULB). The candidate will have an office and relevant administrative support at ULB. The position involves no teaching obligations. Within the project, the selected candidate will work especially on data collection and data analysis. Hence, it is expected that the candidate has some prior experience with social media data collection and analysis (e.g., data mining, statistics, automated text analysis) and affinity with quantitative research methods and knowledge of Belgian politics. The candidate will also be expected to contribute to collective work on the project and will be invited to present the team’s research during conferences and to publish individual or collective research outputs. Importantly, the candidate is expected to interpret and analyze the data in relationship to relevant theoretical approaches in the field of political communication, elite rhetoric and party strategies.

Profile

The candidate will hold a Master’s degree in political science, media studies/journalism or (political) communication. Candidates with a master’s degree in computer sciences with a background in social sciences or humanities will be considered as well as candidates with a master’s degree in another relevant field of the social sciences.

Skills

- Research interest and/or expertise in Belgian politics, political communication, elections and campaign, political parties and/or political participation
- Good command of dataset management and statistical software (SPSS, R, Stata); experience with Python is especially welcomed
- Experience with social media data collection and affinity with quantitative analysis and principles of statistical inference
- Good organizational and time management skills
- Ability to work in a team
- A proactive attitude and problem-solving capabilities, ability to work independently
- Native speaker either in Dutch or French with at least basic knowledge of the other language, as well as good command of English
Application

INTERESTED?

Questions regarding the position can be addressed to Professor Caroline Close (caroline.close@ulb.be) or to dr. Laura Jacobs (laura.jacobs@ulb.be)

APPLICATIONS should include (in one single PDF document):

- a letter of motivation explaining the candidate’s general interest for the project (maximum 1 page)
- a full CV (including detailed grades)
- a short statement on how the candidate envisions to frame the PhD project (maximum 2 pages)
- a recommendation letter of a referee

Please send the above documents electronically to Caroline Close (caroline.close@ulb.be) and Laura Jacobs (laura.jacobs@ulb.be)

The deadline for applications is 31/08/2022.

A telephone or face-to-face interview may be organized in September.

STARTING DATE is 01/10/2022.

Equal opportunity

The Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) is an equal opportunity employer.

Diversité et égalité des chances

La politique de gestion du personnel en matière de diversité et égalité des chances prévoit sur chaque offre d’emploi publiée par l’ULB une mention indiquant que :

« Nous recrutons les candidats.es en fonction de leurs compétences, indépendamment de leur âge, leur genre, leur orientation sexuelle, leur origine, leur nationalité, leurs convictions, leur handicap, etc. »

Les candidats porteurs d’une maladie, d’un trouble ou d’un handicap qui souhaitent bénéficier d’aménagements raisonnables dans le cadre de la procédure de sélection ont la possibilité, lorsqu’ils postulent en ligne, de cocher une case qui attire l’attention de l’équipe Recrutement et lui permet d’adapter les processus de sélection.

Si une personne portee d’une maladie, d’un trouble ou d’un handicap devait être présélectionnée par l’équipe SSRM pour l’offre que vous avez demandé de publier, la personne chargée des projets Diversité au sein de l’équipe (sophie.veys@ulb.be) reprendra contact avec vous pour vous donner de plus amples informations sur le profil du candidat en question.