VACANCY RESEARCH ASSISTANT IN SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

PHD POSITION - 100%

Political science Department – Université libre de Bruxelles

INFORMATION ABOUT THE POSITION

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

Title of the position: Research Assistant (PhD position)
Contract type: PhD Fellowship
Contract length: 12 months, with a possibility to extend it to a 4-year PhD grant
Work Time: Full time (100%)
Funding : ULB seed-money
Salary: about 2,100 euros/month (net salary)

JOB DESCRIPTION

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 political communication. The candidate will be working in the frame of a project that aims to analyze online communication of political actors and elites' discourse in advanced democracies (especially in the Low Countries). The candidate will also be closely involved in establishing a Social Media Observatory in the run-up to the 2024 elections in Belgium.

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 – the Belgian National Fund for Research) during the year.

CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

Nowadays, social media has developed into a powerful tool of political communication for individual politicians, political organizations and citizens. The project aims to analyze more systematically political actors' online communication in advanced democracies both during and beyond official campaign periods. At the empirical level, the project aims to monitor the social media posts of the key political actors (parties, ministers and party leaders) and 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 on social media platforms (especially, Facebook and Twitter)?

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

(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 ?

WORK ENVIRONMENT

The project offers a stimulating working environment in a dynamic and international research team. The project involves both senior and junior researchers in the field of comparative politics, political communication, party politics and political behavior.

The candidate will be based at the Cevipol (ULB). She or he will have an office and relevant administrative support at ULB. She or he will have no teaching obligations. Within the project, the selected candidate will work especially on the data collection and data analysis. Hence, it is expected that the candidate has an experience with social media data collection and analysis (e.g. data mining, statistics, automated text analysis). She or he 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.

PROFILE OF THE CANDIDATE

Qualifications required

The candidate will hold a Master's degree political communication, media studies/journalism, political science or sociology. Eventually, candidates with a Master's degree in computer sciences with a background or interest in social sciences or humanities will be considered.

Scientific knowledge and skills

- Research interest and/or expertise in political communication, elections and campaign, political parties and/or political participation
- Good command of dataset management and statistical software (R, Stata), as well as experience with Python
- Experience with social media data collection and quantitative analysis
- Good organizational and time management skills
- Ability to work in a team
- Native speaker either in Dutch or French with at least basic knowledge of the other language, as well as good command of English

INTERESTED?

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

The deadline for applications is **30/09/2022.**

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

Starting date is 01/11/2022.

APPLICATION

Application should include (in one single PDF document):

- a letter of motivation explaining the candidate's general interest for the project
- 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

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