

Research Associate for a project “The Illiberal Turn? News Consumption, Political Polarization, and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe” (Full-time and fixed-term for 24 months)

Job Ref: REQ190207

As part of the University’s ongoing commitment to redeployment, please note that this vacancy may be withdrawn at any stage of the recruitment process if a suitable redeployee is identified.

<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/socialsciences>

Project Description

This ESRC-funded project will carry out a systematic study of news consumption and political polarization in Central and Eastern Europe, at a key point in time when the region is undergoing dramatic changes, characterized by the rise of populist leaders, resurgence of illiberal nationalism, and a shift towards authoritarian forms of government. Many of these transformations have been linked to changes in information environments, and specifically to the growth of social media and digital platforms. This project aims to shed light on these developments by means of conducting a comparative analysis of the relationship between news consumption and political attitudes, using a novel multi-method analytical framework that combines survey data, digital tracking of media consumption, as well as media diaries and qualitative interviews with audiences in four CEE countries - Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Serbia. The project has also a significant impact component, which will be realized through collaboration with several partner organizations and associations representing media regulators, journalists and civil society activists.

The successful candidate will primarily work with the Principal Investigator, Dr. Vaclav Stetka (School of Social Sciences, Media and Communication Unit), and will be linked to the Centre for Research in Communication and Culture at Loughborough University. They will also collaborate closely with the project’s Co-I, Professor Sabina Mihelj, as well as with the second Research Associate and three local Research Assistants recruited for the project.

Job Description

Job Grade: Specialist and Supporting Academic Grade 6

Job Purpose

The researcher’s primary responsibilities will be to assist with quantitative data collection, analysis and management. The postholder will participate in designing of a representative population survey that will be deployed in all four countries covered by the project, focusing on patterns of news consumption and people’s political attitudes, as well as on their trust in democratic institutions and political participation. They will be required to carry out analyses of the data generated by the population surveys (with the minimum of 1,200 respondents per country) as well as by digital tracking of news consumption in the Czech Republic, including a short pre- and post-EP2019 election survey (N=1,000), involving the use of advanced statistical methods. The successful candidate will also assist in gathering of secondary data relevant for the understanding of political and media system of the countries studied by the project, co-author some of the publications, contribute to impact activities, and lead on

website and social media development. Proficiency in one of the local languages (Czech, Polish, Hungarian, Serbian) is an advantage.

Job Duties

- To actively participate in the design and implementation of population survey, distributed via questionnaire in all four project's countries
- To assist with the design of and implementation of the pre- and post-election survey in the Czech Republic that will be attached to the digital tracking of news consumption
- To be involved in the communication with the polling company that will distribute the questionnaire in all four countries and organize the collection of data via digital tracking technology in the Czech Republic
- To be responsible for the storing of all quantitative data from the project, and to co-ordinate the process of backing up and long-term storing and archiving of the data with Loughborough University's Research Data Manager
- To undertake statistical analyses of the data stemming from the above-mentioned sources, as well as from other sources that will be utilized in the project
- To contribute to the writing of project reports and academic publications, taking on the role of lead, co-author, or assistant as appropriate
- To attend academic conferences and (co-)present project's findings
- To take key responsibility for setting up the project's website and social media accounts, and for disseminating project's outcomes via these channels
- To actively participate in impact activities carried out in co-operation with project's institutional partners
- To be responsible for the organization of at least one project workshop and/or stakeholder meeting
- To conduct literature research and collect background information on the research area
- To contribute to project promotion and public engagement events
- Contribute ideas for new research and enterprise directions
- Maintain confidentiality at all times and ensure that intellectual property (IPR) agreements are not violated
- Engage in training programmes in the University (or elsewhere) that are consistent with the needs and aspirations of the project and those of the Department
- Undertake other duties as may be reasonably requested and that are commensurate with the nature and grade of the post

Points To Note

The purpose of this job description is to indicate the general level of duties and responsibility of the post. The detailed duties may vary from time to time without changing the general character or level of responsibility entailed.

Special Conditions

All staff have a statutory responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves, others and the environment and to prevent harm by their acts or omissions. All staff are therefore required to adhere to the University's Health, Safety and Environmental Policy & Procedures.

All staff should hold a duty and commitment to observing the University's Equality & Diversity policy and procedures at all times. Duties must be carried out in accordance with relevant Equality & Diversity legislation and University policies/procedures.

Successful completion of probation will be dependent on attendance at the University's mandatory courses which include Respecting Diversity and, where appropriate, Recruitment and Selection.

Organisational Responsibility

Reports to Project Investigator, Dr. Vaclav Stetka

Person Specification

Your application will be reviewed with respect to meeting the essential and desirable criteria listed below. Applicants are strongly advised to explicitly state and evidence how they meet each of the essential (and desirable) criteria in their application. Stages of assessment are as follows:

- 1 – Application
- 2 – Test/Assessment Centre/Presentation
- 3 – Interview

Essential Criteria

Area	Criteria	Stage
Experience	Background in [sociology, media/communication studies, political science or another related discipline]	1,3
	Experience of using quantitative social science methodologies, particularly surveys	1,2,3
	Experience of quantitative data analysis, including advanced statistical techniques	1,2,3
Skills and abilities	Ability to design and implement population surveys, using questionnaires	1,3
	Ability to analyse large data sets utilizing advanced statistical techniques	1,3
	Ability to author original research work	1,3
	Active knowledge of SPSS	1,3
	Excellent written and spoken English	1,2,3
	Excellent time management and ability to complete agreed work commitments on time	1,3
	Excellent interpersonal and organisational skills	1,3
	Competence in IT skills, Internet usage and social media (e.g. web site development, social media accounts management)	1,3
	Interest in and willingness to use mixed methods or qualitative methodologies	1,3
	Ability to write project reports and make technical presentations to industrial and academic research groups	1,3
Training	A willingness to undertake further training as appropriate and to adopt new procedures as and when required	1,3
Qualifications	PhD, or close to completion, in sociology, media/communication studies, political science or another related social science discipline	1

Desirable Criteria

Area	Criteria	Stage
Experience	Research experience with one or more of the project's key research areas, i.e. news consumption, digital media use, political polarization, political attitudes, or democracy	1,3
	Experience with comparative, cross-national research	1,3
	Working in a high quality academic research environment	1,3
Skills and abilities	Proven ability to publish in high quality academic journals and present at academic conferences	1,3

	Demonstrable knowledge of the political and media system of one or more Central and Eastern European countries covered by the project	1,2,3
	Proven ability to use mixed methods or qualitative methodologies	1,3
	Active knowledge of at least one of the languages of countries covered by the project (Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Serbian)	1,3
Qualifications	PhD in [sociology, media/communication studies, political science or another related social science discipline]	1
Other	Travel / Able to travel Independently	1,3

Conditions of Service

The position is full-time and fixed term for 24 months. Salary will be on Specialist and Supporting Academic Grade 6, £30,395 to £36,261 per annum, at a starting salary to be confirmed on offer of appointment. Subject to annual pay award.

The appointment will be subject to the University's Terms and Conditions of Employment for Staff Grades 6 and above, details of which can be found [here](#).

The University is committed to enabling staff to maintain a healthy work-home balance and has a number of family-friendly policies which can be found [here](#).

The University offers a wide range of employee benefits which can be found [here](#).

We also offer an on-campus nursery with subsidised places, subsidised places at local holiday clubs and a childcare voucher scheme (further details are available at: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/services/hr/a-z/childcare-information---page.html>)

In addition, the University is supportive, wherever possible, of flexible working arrangements. We also strive to create a culture that supports equality and celebrates diversity throughout the campus. The University holds a Bronze Athena SWAN award which recognises the importance of support for women at all stages of their academic career. For further information on Athena SWAN see <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/services/hr/athena-swan/>

Informal Enquiries

Informal enquiries should be made to Dr. Vaclav Stetka by email at V.Stetka@lboro.ac.uk

Applications

The closing date for receipt of applications is **3 April 2019**. Interviews will be held on **16 April 2019**.