

Research Associate for a project “The Illiberal Turn? News Consumption, Political Polarization, and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe”

REQ190622

As part of the University’s ongoing commitment to redeployment, please note that this vacancy may be withdrawn at any stage of the recruitment process if a suitable redeployee is identified.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 also has 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 Project Co-Investigator, Professor Sabina Mihelj (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 Principal Investigator, Dr Václav Štětka, 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 qualitative data collection, analysis and management. The postholder will participate in designing qualitative data collection instruments (interviews and media diaries) that will be applied in all four countries covered by the project and will focus on practices of news consumption and media use, the meanings associated with these practices, and their relationships with political attitudes and political participation. They will be required to collect and analyse data for one of the four countries, collate qualitative data collected by Local Research Assistants in the remaining three countries, and assist the Co-I with the comparative analysis of qualitative data from all four countries. The successful candidate will also support the PI and the Co-I with the integrative analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, co-author some of the publications, and contribute

to impact activities and events. Proficiency in English and one of the local languages (Czech, Polish, Hungarian, Serbian) is essential.

Job Duties

- To actively participate in the design of qualitative data collection instruments;
- To collect and analyse qualitative data for one of the four countries;
- To be involved in the communication with the polling companies that will assist with selecting and recruiting participants for all the four countries;
- To coordinate activities with the three Local Research Assistants collecting and analysing qualitative data for the remaining three countries;
- To co-ordinate the process of backing up and long-term storing and archiving of project's qualitative data with Loughborough University's Research Data Manager;
- To undertake comparative analysis of qualitative data from the four countries, in collaboration with Local Research Assistants;
- To be actively involved in the process of co-writing project reports and academic publications, taking on the role of lead author, co-author, or writing assistant as appropriate;
- To attend academic conferences and (co-)present project's findings;
- To actively participate in the impact activities carried out in co-operation with project's partners;
- To be responsible for the organization of at least one project event (e.g. workshop, conference or stakeholder meeting);
- To conduct literature research and collect background information on the research area.
- To contribute to project promotion and public engagement events.
- To contribute ideas for new research and enterprise directions.
- To maintain confidentiality at all times and ensure that intellectual property (IPR) agreements are not violated.
- To 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.
- To 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 Co-Investigator, Professor Sabina Mihelj

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	Demonstrable knowledge of at least one of the following fields and relevant literature: audience research, media sociology, media anthropology, political communication, Eastern European politics and society, or a cognate area relevant to the project focus	1, 2,3
	Experience of using qualitative social science methodologies, such as interviews and/or diaries	1,2,3
	Demonstrable knowledge of media, politics and society in one or more Central and Eastern European countries covered by the project	1,2,3
	Experience of authoring original work for doctoral dissertation, academic journal papers, conference/working papers and/or technical reports	1,3
Skills and abilities	Ability to design and implement qualitative interviews and media diaries	1,2,3
	Ability to analyse large sets of qualitative data using appropriate qualitative data analysis software (e.g. NVivo)	1,2,3
	Interest in using mixed qualitative & quantitative methodologies	1,3
	Excellent written and spoken English	1,2,3
	Excellent time management skills 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. Power Point presentation or similar, web site development, social media accounts management)	1,2,3
	Ability to write project reports and make technical presentations to industrial and academic research groups	1,3
	Excellent communication skills in at least one of the following languages: Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Serbian	1,3
Qualifications	PhD in sociology, media/communication studies, cultural studies, anthropology or another related social science or humanities discipline, or very close to completion	1
Training	A willingness to undertake further training as appropriate and to adopt new procedures as and when required	1,3

Desirable Criteria

Area	Criteria	Stage
Qualifications	Completed PhD in sociology, media/communication studies, cultural studies, anthropology or another related social science or humanities discipline	1
Experience	Experience of conducting research in one or more of the project's key research areas, i.e. news consumption, audience research, political polarization, political attitudes, democracy, or a cognate area relevant to the project focus	1,3
	Experience of analysing large qualitative data sets using appropriate software (preferably, NVivo)	1,3
	Experience of using mixed qualitative & quantitative methodologies	1,3
	Experience with comparative, cross-national research as part of a team	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
Other	Ability to travel and work independently	1,3

Conditions of Service

The position is **full-time** and **fixed term** for 18 months, commencing from 1 January 2020. 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.

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/>

Applications

The closing date for receipt of applications is **26 September 2019**.

Interviews will be held on **7 October 2019**.