The Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies at the University of Tartu invites applications for three fully-funded PhD positions in the academic year 2020/2021

**Application deadline:** 1 June/ 15 June 2020 for international/ local applicants (see details here)

**Duration (nominal study period):** September 2020 – August 2024

**Funding:** A monthly stipend of 1,060€ (conditions stipulated here)

You are invited to submit your application along with a research proposal on one of the following topics:

1. **E-Governance and digital public services (1 position)**

The general aim of this PhD dissertation project is to examine the political, social and/or economic impact of e-governance and digital public services. Within this framework, applicants should define and describe a more specific focus – for instance, assessing the quality of existing e-governance solutions and services, analysing user experiences, suggesting improvements to existing services, or providing ideas and, possibly, prototypes, for developing new solutions. The proposed research project has to be broadly related to the objectives and activities of the ERA Chair in E-Governance and Digital Public Services, a 5-year project supported by the European Commission (see: [https://eceps.ut.ee](https://eceps.ut.ee)).

Interested candidates are invited to prepare a research proposal outlining the specific research project they would pursue under this general topic. Admission requirements, including guidelines for the research proposal, can be found here.

Main supervisor: ERA Chair Professor in E-Governance and Digital Public Services at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies (the position will be filled by September 1, 2020).

Co-supervisor: Dr Mihkel Solvak, Senior Researcher at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, mihkel.solvak@ut.ee (when sending an email, please use subject line “ERA Chair PhD position”)

Please contact Dr Mihkel Solvak (with Maili Vilson, maili.vilson@ut.ee in cc) for an approval of your proposal ahead of the application deadline! However, please note that the prospective supervisor is not in a position to provide extensive comments or help develop project descriptions at the application stage, given the large number of applicants.
2. Applications of logical models in Social Sciences (1 position)

The aim of the PhD project is to apply quantitative predictive models (see explanation below) in the field of Social Sciences. Applicants should define a more specific focus in the framework of this general theme. For example, predictive logical models can be applied to the analysis of electoral systems, electoral behaviour, party systems and their development, the spread of various technologies, connections between economic cycles and politics, interstate relations, international conflicts, etc.


Examples of the application of logical predictive models include:


The prospective PhD candidate should have an interest in and intermediate knowledge of quantitative social science methods, such as the prevalent statistical or econometric techniques.

Interested candidates are invited to prepare a research proposal outlining the specific research project they would pursue under this general topic. Admission requirements, including guidelines for the research proposal, can be found here.

Main supervisor: Rein Taagepera, Professor Emeritus at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies and University of California, Irvine.

Co-supervisor: Dr Mihkel Solvak, Senior Researcher at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, mihkel.solvak@ut.ee (when sending an email, please use subject line “Logical models PhD position”)

Please contact Dr Mihkel Solvak (with Maili Vilson, maili.vilson@ut.ee in cc) for an approval of your proposal ahead of the application deadline! However, please note that the prospective supervisor is not in a position to provide extensive comments or help develop project descriptions at the application stage, given the large number of applicants.
Finally, 1 position will be filled with a candidate from topics 3-6:

3. Changing political cleavages and their implications in Europe

This topic focuses on contemporary transformations of patterns of political conflict and contestation in European societies, as well as the impact of such transformations on political behaviour and public attitudes (e.g. voting behaviour, support for parties, political incumbents and institutions). The traditional cleavage theory developed by Lipset and Rokkan in 1967, which positions voters along the social-economic and religious-secular dimensions, is facing multiple challenges. The European debt crisis and the migration crisis have revealed new social and political divides which focus on globalisation, European integration and immigration, resulting in a successful politicisation of these issues by mainstream as well as populist actors. The rapid rise of digital technologies has transformed the public sphere and altered political processes. Moreover, liberal democracy is no longer considered to be “the only game in town.” Some of the new cleavages have proven to be extraordinarily divisive, contributing to high levels of political polarization and undermining societal cohesion.

Taken together, these developments suggest that European societies may have reached a critical juncture in their political development – one where liberal democracy, shared identity and societal cohesion are at stake. Responding to the need to better understand these new and emerging realities, the PhD project will investigate changing political cleavages and their impact on European politics and polities. The research will be conducted using quantitative methods and will rely on data from large-n cross-national surveys, e.g. the European Social Survey, Eurobarometer, Comparative Study of Electoral Systems or the European Election Study. The PhD candidate undertaking this project is expected to have basic statistical skills and be familiar with widely used data analysis methods such as regression modelling. As part of the project, the candidate is expected to develop joint publications with the supervisors.

Interested candidates are invited to prepare a research proposal outlining the specific research project they would pursue under this general topic. Admission requirements, including guidelines for the research proposal, can be found here.

Main supervisor: Piret Ehin, Senior Researcher, Deputy Head of the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, piret.ehin@ut.ee

Co-supervisor: Liisa Talving, Research Fellow at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

Please contact Dr Piret Ehin for an approval of your proposal ahead of the application deadline! However, please note that the prospective supervisor is not in a position to provide extensive comments or help develop project descriptions at the application stage, given the large number of applicants.
4. Contemporary challenges to the process of European integration and their political and institutional implications

The aim of PhD applications in this area of study is to explore and assess the impact of internal and/or external factors on the speed, direction, and intensity of the process of European integration.

The study would possibly highlight the political and institutional dynamics, the role of the key actors involved, and the related developmental trajectories.

Starting from the early 2000s, following the most ambitious enlargement in its history and the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in 2005, the European Union has been facing multiple and successive challenges that have put to test the resilience of its decision-making and increased its degree of politicization at the society and partisan level.

The diverse nature of these challenges includes – but is not limited to – internal and external security threats, migration flows and humanitarian emergencies, party-based populism and Euroscepticism, economic crisis and financial instability, complex multicultural societies and identity-related dividing lines.

Both qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research designs are welcome.

Interested candidates are invited to prepare a research proposal outlining the specific research project they would pursue under this general topic. Admission requirements, including guidelines for the research proposal, can be found here.

Main supervisor: Dr Stefano Braghiroli, Associate Professor of European Studies at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, stefano.braghiroli@ut.ee

Co-supervisor: to be determined according to the substantive focus of the proposed project.

Please contact Dr Stefano Braghiroli for an approval of your proposal ahead of the application deadline! However, please note that the prospective supervisor is not in a position to provide extensive comments or help develop project descriptions at the application stage, given the large number of applicants.
5. Applications of quantitative text analysis in comparative politics

The general aim of the PhD project is to analyse either classical or contemporary political science concepts or phenomena through modern quantitative text analysis tools. Applicants should define a more specific focus in the framework of this general theme. In contemporary societies much of public political discourse is in one way or another digitally available, but due to its sheer volume, qualitatively unanalysable. This is where quantitative text analysis models applied to political science problems can expand the scope of the latter.

For example, text analysis models can be applied to the analysis of populist discourse, the political positions of candidates or parties, ideological or emotional polarization, and the dynamics and content of media or parliamentary discourse. In this way it is possible to provide a fresh perspective on the analysis of topics that have previously relied on expert or mass opinion or qualitative (content) analysis.

The PhD candidate undertaking such a project is expected to have good statistical skills and be familiar with widely used data analysis methods as well as the basics of collecting and processing textual data in R (or Python). As part of the project, the candidate is expected to develop joint publications with the supervisors.

Interested candidates are invited to prepare a research proposal outlining the specific research project they would pursue under this general topic. Admission requirements, including guidelines for the research proposal, can be found here.

Main supervisor: to be determined according to the substantive focus of the proposed project.

Co-supervisor: Dr Martin Mölder, Researcher at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, martin.molder@ut.ee

Please contact Dr Martin Mölder for an approval of your proposal ahead of the application deadline! However, please note that the prospective supervisor is not in a position to provide extensive comments or help develop project descriptions at the application stage, given the large number of applicants.
6. You can also submit a proposal on a topic of your own choosing, on the condition that the proposal fits the research interest of one of the supervisors at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies.

The proposal should fall under (one of) the following broad areas of supervision:

**Comparative Politics:**
- Electoral studies, political participation, and political culture;
- Democracy and democratization;
- Nationalism and ethnopoltics;
- Memory politics and transitional justice;
- E-services, e-governance and e-voting, and the impact of information and communication technologies on political participation and electoral behaviour.

**International Relations:**
- International relations, international security, and foreign policy;
- Identity, sovereignty, geopolitics;
- Borders, regions, regionalism;
- European integration;
- Historical and contemporary theories of international justice, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism.

*Our regional focus is mainly on:*
- Russia and Eurasia
- Eastern Europe
- European Union

Admission requirements, including guidelines for the research proposal, can be found here. We require applicants to establish contact with one of our faculty before submitting an application to receive a preliminary consent on supervision, in order to avoid rejection on thematic grounds. However, please note that the prospective supervisors are not in a position to provide extensive comments or help develop project descriptions at the application stage, given the large number of applicants.

Please contact either the potential advisor directly or Ms Maili Vilson, Coordinator of PhD programme (maili.vilson@ut.ee), for advice on potential advisor(s) for your proposal ahead of the application deadline!