



VACANCY – call for applications
Doctoral Researcher (100%) in Political Science
4 years
Project “Why do people run as candidates?” (Whycan)

INFORMATION ABOUT THE POSITION

Faculty of Philosophy and social sciences, Department of political science
Centre d'étude de la vie politique (Cevipol)
Director : Prof. Amandine Crespy
Promotors : Dr. Audrey Vandeleeene and Prof. Jean-Benoit Pilet

Title of the position: Doctoral researcher
Type of contract : CDD – 4-year contract
Length of contract : 12 months, renewable three times
Work time: Full time (100%)
Start date : 1/10/2025
Funding: FNRS Projet de recherche (PDR)
Salary: about 2,100 euros/month (net salary)

The Department of Political Science at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) is hiring a doctoral researcher with a specialization in qualitative research (in depth interviews) and interest in quantitative research for the project “Why do people run as candidates?” (Whycan) funded via research project (PDR) from the FRS-FNRS (2025-2028).

Context of the project

Candidates' motivations for running for office are an important theme in the study of representation. Empirical work on this subject has shown that this decision is the result of an interaction between personal motivations and the opportunity structure that is the political system. Research reports different stages in candidacy, distinguishing between interest in a candidacy (nascent political ambition), the decision to be a candidate (expressive political ambition) and the willingness to continue/progress or not apply anymore (stable/progressive/discrete political ambition). However, the results are limited in that they consider only a limited number of motivations, concern mainly American applications and do not consider inequalities in access to the opportunity structure linked to social inequalities. The aim of the WHYCAN project, using a mixed methodology, is to understand the different types of motivation that underlie the decision to be a candidate, how these motivations interact with the opportunity structure of the Belgian system, and how social inequalities condition interest in this form of political participation.



JOB DESCRIPTION

This is a call for applications for a full-time doctoral position for four years.

The doctoral researcher will become an active member of the research project “Why do people run as candidates?” (Whycan). The project offers a stimulating working environment in a dynamic research team. The project involves two research teams from Université Catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain – CESPOL – under the leadership of Prof. Pierre Baudewyns) and Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB – CEVIPOL).

The researcher will be based at the CEVIPOL (ULB). She or he will have a shared office (at CEVIPOL, in ULB Sociology Institute located at Avenue Jeanne 44 in Ixelles) and relevant administrative support at ULB. She or he will have no teaching obligations. She or he will be expected to contribute to collective work on the WHYCAN project, and to present and publish individual or collective research outputs. She or he will also be involved in the scientific activities organized within CEVIPOL (research seminars, collective projects, conferences).

With 87 members, CEVIPOL is the largest political science research center in Belgium. Located within the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences, its members conduct cutting-edge research in the fields of political sociology, comparative politics, European studies, and area studies (Russia and the Caucasus, the Americas, the Middle East, and Asia). The selected candidate will be fully integrated in CEVIPOL’s intellectual and social activities.

Within the project WHYCAN, the selected candidate will work on Work Package 2 (Why do you (not) run (anymore)?) that focuses on the triggers and the barriers of candidates’ political ambition. The candidate’s dissertation will focus on understanding how the interplay between the structure of opportunities, personal characteristics and personal motivations of candidates for legislative elections in Belgium supports the decision to either run for office or to decide not to run anymore. As politics remains a non-representative world for some segments of the population, the work package intends to understand which factors may help explain why some candidates have an easier, respectively harder, time deciding to jump into politics and to exit it. Sexism, agism, racism are expected to play their part in the decision-making processes of candidates, and the doctoral researcher may decide to focus on some of these aspects. The dissertation will mainly be articulated around in-depth interviews conducted by the doctoral researcher with political elites, and may also make use of data collected in the framework of the project (Belgian Candidate Surveys, and general population surveys).

PROFILE

Qualifications required

The candidate will hold a Master’s degree in political science, social sciences or humanities.

Skills

- Research interest and/or expertise in elections, representation and/or political parties
- Research interest and/or expertise in Belgian politics
- Good command of interview techniques and qualitative data analysis
- Good command of quantitative methods, or willingness to be trained in developing such skills
- Good organizational and time management skills



- Ability to work in a team
- A good command of English, and French and/or Dutch (or willingness to improve one's command of the other language during the scholarship, with the aim of conducting in-depth interviews in French and Dutch)

Mobility Requirement

- The selected candidate will be required to live in Belgium and come to work in Brussels. Limited telework options are available.

APPLICATION

Application procedure

Questions regarding the position can be addressed to Dr. Audrey Vandeleeene (Audrey.Vandeleeene@ulb.be)

The successful candidate will be selected based on the quality of the CV, achievements, motivation, and fit with the position. Each candidate should explain clearly her/his interest in the project and how and why she or he can contribute to its development.

Application Files

All application documents must be compiled into a single PDF file and sent via email to Dr. Audrey Vandeleeene (Audrey.Vandeleeene@ulb.be).

The application file must include the following documents, in English:

- a letter of motivation explaining the candidate's general interest for the project
- a full curriculum vitae (including detailed grades)
- a copy of a valid passport/ID, as well as copies of the candidate's Bachelor and Master's degree certificate (if already available)
- a short statement on how the candidate envisions to frame the PhD dissertation (maximum 2 pages)
- a copy of the candidate's master thesis or final paper

Application Calendar

- ✓ Deadline for applications: 12/09/2025.
- ✓ Notification of short-listed candidates: mid-September.
- ✓ Interviews: Monday 22/09/2025, on ULB Campus Solbosch (Ixelles), with Dr. Audrey Vandeleeene and Prof. Jean-Benoît Pilet.
- ✓ Final decision: as soon as possible after the interviews
- ✓ Start date: 1/10/2025

Equal opportunity policy

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



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« 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 porteuse 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.