



GEM DIAMOND

# PhD POSITION IN **POLITICAL SCIENCE & EUROPEAN STUDIES**

Fellowship Call for Application

DEADLINE: September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – 17.00 CET

EARLY-STAGE RESEARCHER I3bis

## **POLITICAL NARRATIVES AND EU LEGITIMIZATION: BETWEEN UNITY AND DISSENSUS**



Doctoral Fellowships funded as part of a European Joint Doctorate supported by the European Commission's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action.

## RESEARCH PROJECT

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### ENVIRONMENT

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This 3-Year-long doctoral fellowship is offered as part of a specific collective project within a multiannual international research effort on **Globalisation, Europe, and Multilateralism (GEM)**. This project (2022-2026), coordinated by the Institut d'études européennes (IEE) at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), will assess the EU's capacity to act given the challenges facing **Democratic Institutions**, the rise of **Alternative Models** and mounting Normative Dissensus (**DIAMOND**).

**GEM-DIAMOND** is a *Marie Skłodowska Curie Action - Doctoral Network (MSCA-DN)* involving 7 European and 4 international degree-awarding Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) alongside 6 well-established non-academic institutions. The project will hire and train 16 doctoral fellows to help address knowledge gaps associated with the growing normative tensions undermining multilateral and democratic practice – for further information see [www.gem-diamond.eu](http://www.gem-diamond.eu).

GEM-DIAMOND's overall research program will collectively tackle three shared knowledge gaps regarding contemporary strains on liberal democracy:

- **Objective 1:** Conceptualizing the seemingly mounting dissensus surrounding liberal democracy.
- **Objective 2:** Unpacking the ambiguous role different actors can play as both champions and challengers of liberal democratic norms, values, and practices.
- **Objective 3:** Assessing the impact of increased dissensus regarding liberal democracy on the policy instruments of the EU and its capacity to act in its internal and external policies.

Early-Stage Researcher n°13bis (**ESR13bis**) is part of **GEM-DIAMOND**'s first Work Package (WPI) entitled '**Conceptualising Growing Dissensus over Liberal Democracy**'.

WPI includes 5 individual doctoral projects that will each unpack a key strand of dissensus facing liberal democratic norms, principles, and values from a distinct disciplinary point of view. Both individually and collectively, the 5 PhD fellows associated with WPI will provide the conceptual clarification of dissensus needed to understand how it affects EU policy instruments. WPI will neither review the normative underpinnings of the theory of democracy nor revisit existing work on deliberative democracy in Europe, it will rather seek to characterise what makes present-day dissensus erode institutional trust and thus uniquely challenging to existing democratic practices, including deliberative ones. Each of the four individual research projects will lead up to a Double Doctoral Manuscript which will contribute to this effort from a specific discipline. Ultimately, WPI will **combine four disciplinary theory-building efforts to sketch an**

Entitled **‘Political Narratives and EU Legitimization: Between Unity and Dissensus’** the individual research project of **ESR13** is in the fields of **Political Science** and **European Studies**.

**ESR13bis** will analyse how the European Union (EU) deals with the conflictualisation of identities and values as means or ends of the political debate. Much research has been done on the effects of this trend in European politics, but far less on how the European/national institutions and elites are dealing with it. The approach in terms of political narratives is a way to bridge the gap.

The recent resurgence of interest in narratives should be understood as a new movement in the constant oscillation between the ideal and pragmatic dimensions of EU legitimation. In the 2000s, the political and intellectual agenda was mainly defined in terms of European identity and values. From the mid-2010s onwards, the emphasis has been on the search for practices that can bring Europeans together, such as the experiences of 'everyday Europe' and the advocacy of the 'European way of life'. Major recent crises such as the pandemic and the war in Ukraine relaunched the debate on the core components of Europeanness. The constant renewal of narratives produced by institutions, intellectuals and civil society highlights the back-and-forth between different visions of the EU as a polity and its legitimation, either reproducing the process of nation-state building (myth of origins, congruence between culture and politics) or relying on a functionalist justification based on results.

**ESR13bis** will study the genesis of European narratives; their circulation and re-interpretations across national, institutional and policy boundaries; their combination, interactions, and competition; and their reception by civil society and citizens; and their effects in creating unity and/or dissensus.

The doctoral researcher will be part of a small ULB-based team and a broader international network developing various case studies in terms of thematic narratives (e.g., on way of life, sovereignty, strategic autonomy, rule of law, borders; or policy domains, e.g., political communication; university and research; digital issues; defence). The narrative.s that will be the focus of the PhD will be discussed on the basis of the project submitted by the applicant and the requirements of the collective research framework.

**As part of their application, candidates will be asked to submit a personal interpretation of the research project in the form a specific project proposal of 2-3 pages, including a research question, a theoretical framework, a methodological strategy, and a justification for the suggested empirical choices.**

## OBJECTIVES

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ESR I 3bis will:

- Be hired for 36-months by ULB as a full-time Doctoral Researcher
  - The first year – Oct. 2023/Sept 2024 – the fellow will be hired as part of a Belgian doctoral fellowship program.
  - The Second & Third years – Oct 2024/Sept. 2025 & Oct 2025/Sept. 2026 – the fellow will be hired as a fully funded MSCA fellow.
- All three years of their funding, the Fellow will be fully integrated in the GEM-DIAMOND training and research program.
- Form year I the fellow will work under the direction:
  - **Pr. François Foret** (ULB) –Lead Co-Supervisor
- By the end of year I the other members of the Joint Supervisory Trio will be jointly designated among the academic and non-academic EU-based GEM-DIAMOND partner institutions. This means the other supervisors of the Fellow's Double Doctoral Degree set-up will include:
  - **A to be designated professor from one of the EU-based consortium partners, either LUISS (IT) or ParisI (Fr)**
  - **A to be designated expert from one of the consortium's EU-based non-academic partners – i.e. IAI (IT), FIDH (Fr), GMF (BE), CEPS (BE) or PATRIR (RO)**
- Individually work towards a double doctoral degree in 'Social Sciences' under the joint supervision of Pr. **F. Foret** (ULB) and **a to be designated professor from one of the EU-based consortium partners**
- Participate in all collective research and training activities and submit to the program's regular joint evaluations.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

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ESR I 3bis will:

1. Complete the Scheduled Mobility Agenda:
  - a. Training & Research Stay @ ULB (Oc. 2023 - Aug. 2024)
  - b. Research Stay @ TBC (Sept. 2024 – June. 2025)
  - c. Non-Academic Secondment @ TBC (Aug. 2025 - Sept. 2025)
2. Successfully accomplish the doctoral training scheduled both at the local and GEM-DIAMOND levels.
3. Secure a doctoral training certificate from ULB.
4. Contribute to a WPI
5. Contribute to two-project wide manuscripts:
  - a. A Handbook on 'Rethinking Impact in Political & Social Sciences'
  - b. An Edited Volume reflecting the shared conclusions of the project
6. Submit an article to a jointly edited special issue supported by GEM-DIAMOND
7. Write an original PhD dissertation on '**Political Narratives and EU Legitimization: Between Unity and Dissensus**'

## CO-SUPERVISORS

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**Pr. François Foret**  
[François.Foret@ulb.be](mailto:François.Foret@ulb.be)

**TBD**

## HOST INSTITUTIONS

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ULB (BE)

TBD

## PhD PROGRAMME

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PhD in Political & Social Sciences

PhD in International Relations &  
European Studies

## TRAINING AND MOBILITY

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### MOBILITY PROGRAMME

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- Training & Research Stay @ ULB (Oct. 2023 - Aug. 2024)
- Research Stay @ TBC (Sept. 024 – June. 2025)
- Non-Academic Secondment @ TBC (Aug. 2025 - Sept. 2025)

### TRAINING PROGRAMME

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- 2023-2024 (Y1): Methodological training @ ULB + GEM-DIAMOND Joint activities
- 2024-2025 (Y2): GEM-DIAMOND Joint activities + Non-Academic Secondment

## POST DESCRIPTION

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### TITLE

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ULB Mini-ARC/Marie Curie Doctoral Fellow

### HIRING INSTITUTION

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ULB (Brussels, Belgium)

### DURATION

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36 Months (October 2023 – September 2026)

### INCOME

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3.540.39€ Gross per month

*NB: this is a gross EU contribution to the salary cost of the researcher. The net salary will result from deducting all compulsory (employer/employee) social security contributions as well as direct taxes.*

### ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

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Full Social Coverage  
Travel & Research Funds  
Family Allowance per month - *When applicable*

## REQUIREMENTS

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### DEGREE

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Top level graduate degree (Master or equivalent providing access to PhD programs in Political or Social Sciences).

### MINIMAL CREDITS

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Applicants must submit at least one diploma meeting one of the following requirements: (1) a two-year master program (120 ECTS) or equivalent, (2) a one-year graduate program following a prior undergraduate degree if both diplomas total at least 300 ECTS or equivalent; (3) a single four-year higher education program offering 300 ECTS or more.

### LANGUAGE

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English proficiency must be attested either through a previous English language diploma, or an internationally recognised proficiency test (i.e., IELTS, IBT, TOEFL or Cambridge). The researcher should be in the first four years of their research careers at the time of recruitment and have not been awarded a doctoral degree so far.

### SPECIFIC SKILLS

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The researcher is expected to contribute to various tasks, among others: state of the art of the debates about European legitimization, political communication, identity politics, and political interactions between national and European levels of governance; process tracing, discourse, and content analysis; interviews with civil servants, politicians, experts, and members of civil society; management of online surveys; supervision of parliamentary debates and qualitative case studies. Project management and communication are also part of the duties.

### NON-DISCRIMINATION

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No discrimination will be made on the base of nationality, gender, race, religion, or disability.

### APPLICATION

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Complete and timely submission via the on-line application system.

## HOW TO APPLY

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### TILL SEPTEMBER 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (5PM, CET)

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Submission of applications a single PDF file sent to [pmo@gem-stones.eu](mailto:pmo@gem-stones.eu)

### BY SEPTEMBER 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (5PM, CET)

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Candidates must apply by sending in the following information:

- A full academic CV
- A personal essay describing the applicant's motivation and outlook on the suggested research program (incl. the reasoning behind their expression of interest, a statement of motivation and most importantly personal interpretation of the research project, ideally in the form of an initial research project.
- An academic record with scan of the degree qualifications
- A proof of language proficiency
- Two academic contacts which can be consulted by the selection committee.

### BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 25<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> 2023

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Shortlisted candidates will be invited ~~to submit~~ to an online interview.

### BY OCTOBER 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023

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Shortlisted candidates will be informed about final decision.

### BY OCTOBER 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023

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Selected candidate to arrive at the ULB (Brussels, Belgium) to start his/her training and research.

#### **Project Management Office (PMO)**

c/o Institut d'Études Européennes Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB CPI72)

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